Modern deep-sea coral (Desmophyllum dianthus) nitrogen isotopes from samples collected between 1961 and 2009 (DeepSeaCoralNitrogen project)

Website: https://www.bco-dmo.org/dataset/692802
Data Type: experimental
Version:
Version Date: 2017-08-01

Project
» Nitrogen isotopic (d15N) composition of carbonate-bound organic nitrogen in Deep Sea Corals: A new, high resolution proxy for N cycle studies (DeepSeaCoralNitrogen)

Contributors	Affiliation	Role
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Dataset Description

This dataset contains d15N isotope data and nitrogen content from scleractinian coral (Desmophyllum dianthus) samples obtained from various specimen collections. The original coral samples were collected at a variety of sites worldwide between 1961 and 2009. Coral age from radiocarbon dating and Uranium-Thorium dating, sample depth, latitude, and longitude are also included.

These data were published as supplemental table S1 in:

Wang, X. T., Prokopenko, M. G., Sigman, D. M., Adkins, J. F., Robinson, L. F., Ren, H., ... & Haug, G. H. (2014). Isotopic composition of carbonate-bound organic nitrogen in deep-sea scleractinian corals: A new window into past biogeochemical change. Earth and Planetary Science Letters, 400, 243-250. doi:10.1016/j.epsl.2014.05.048

Methods & Sampling

Nitrogen isotopes were generated using the persulfate oxidation and denitrified method in the Sigman Lab at Princeton University. The precision of this method is 0.2 permil (d15N vs. air)].

For the Smithsonian samples, we chose only those specimens that had a clear boundary visible on the outer surface of the coral cup between the part which had been covered by the coral tissue vs. the part exposed to seawater. This feature indicates the corals were modern/near modern samples.

For more methodology details see Wang et al. 2014.

Wang, X. T., Prokopenko, M. G., Sigman, D. M., Adkins, J. F., Robinson, L. F., Ren, H., ... & Haug, G. H. (2014). Isotopic composition of carbonate-bound organic nitrogen in deep-sea scleractinian corals: A new window into past biogeochemical change. Earth and Planetary Science Letters, 400, 243-250.
doi: 10.1016/j.epsl.2014.05.048

Data Processing Description

These data are raw nitrogen isotope data generated in the Sigman Lab at Princeton University.

The standard deviations were calculated from replicates or triplicates from one specimen, not the analytical error.

BCO-DMO Data Manager Processing Notes:
* added a conventional header with dataset name, PI name, version date
* modified parameter names to conform with BCO-DMO naming conventions
* blank values replaced with no data value 'nd'

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Data Files

File
d15N_D_dianthus.csv (Comma Separated Values (.csv), 4.36 KB) MD5:4e5e18aea4c5f581626cc6154b9f40ee Primary data file for dataset ID 692802

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Parameters

Parameter	Description	Units
catalog_num	Catalog number used in museum or lab specified as the source	unitless
source	Source of coral sample; museum or name of collection owner	unitless
sci_name	Coral scientific name	unitless
year_collected	Year or range of years of sample collection	unitless
age	Coral age	years
ocean_region	Ocean region where sample was collected	unitless
lat	Latitude of sample collection	decimal degrees
lon	Longitude of sample collection	decimal degrees
depth	Depth of sample collecction	meters
d15N	d15N (ratio of stable isotopes 15N:14N)	dimensionless
d15N_sd	Standard deviation of d15N; Calculated from replicates or triplicates from one specimen	dimensionless
N_content	Total nitrogen content in coral skeleton	micromoles N per gram carbonate (umol/g)
N_content_sd	Total nitrogen content in coral skeleton	micromoles N per gram carbonate (umol/g)

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Instruments

Dataset-specific Instrument Name	Gas chromatography
Generic Instrument Name	Gas Chromatograph
Generic Instrument Description	Instrument separating gases, volatile substances, or substances dissolved in a volatile solvent by transporting an inert gas through a column packed with a sorbent to a detector for assay. (from SeaDataNet, BODC)

Dataset-specific Instrument Name	isotope ratio mass spectrometry
Generic Instrument Name	Isotope-ratio Mass Spectrometer
Generic Instrument Description	The Isotope-ratio Mass Spectrometer is a particular type of mass spectrometer used to measure the relative abundance of isotopes in a given sample (e.g. VG Prism II Isotope Ratio Mass-Spectrometer).

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Deployments

DeepSeaCoralNitrogen_corals

Website	https://www.bco-dmo.org/deployment/692467
Platform	Prokopenko_DeepSeaCoralNitrogen

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Project Information

Nitrogen isotopic (d15N) composition of carbonate-bound organic nitrogen in Deep Sea Corals: A new, high resolution proxy for N cycle studies (DeepSeaCoralNitrogen)

Coverage: Sub-Antarctic waters and Antarctic waters

PI supplied project description:

Intellectual Merit

The history of the nitrogen (N) cycle provides insight into the links between past climate and marine biogeochemical cycles. Interpretations of the history of the N cycle rely on the nitrogen isotopic composition (del15N) of Particulate Organic Nitrogen (del15N-PON) preserved in sedimentary archives such as: bulk organic nitrogen (ON) buried in anoxic/suboxic sediments, skeletal-bound ON in diatom frustules and foraminiferal tests, and organic skeletons of deep-sea proteinaceous corals. As is often is the case with paleo-proxies, these archives have advantages, as well as limitations, the latter arising from temporal and/or spatial

restrictions in distribution. Therefore, multiple archives are needed for better understanding the patterns and causes of N cycle variability in the past.

To improve upon the geographic and temporal resolution of del15N paleo-records, this projects evaluates a new proxy for the history of the marine N cycle-- del15N of ON bound within the mineral lattice of deep-sea corals (DSC). The project included two parts: 1) a modern calibration study; 2) a survey of d15N in the fossil corals from the Southern Ocean and comparison with previously published records of the diatom- and foraminifera-bound del15N.

Summary of findings

A survey of modern coral specimens (Desmophyllum dianthus) from disparate oceanographic environments, each chosen to represent a distinct del15N signature of PON exported from the euphotic zone showed strong statistical correlation between the coral-bound ON (CB-del15N) and del15N of regional export PON (Wang et al., 2014), establishing the fidelity of CB-del15N proxy.

In the second phase, the research group generated a set of time-resolved records of del15N in fossil D. dianthus from the Subantarctic (south of Tasmania and northern Drake Passage) and Antarctic (southern Drake Passage) regions of the Southern Ocean, spanning 40Ka through the present (Wang et al., 2017). In the modern Southern Ocean, the surface nutrients (including nitrate) are not fully consumed, resulting in leakage of deeply sequestered CO2 to the atmosphere. Incomplete nitrate consumption is manifested in low del15N of the exported modern PON. Wang et al. (2017) found that in both Southern Ocean regions the average CB-del15N during Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) was 4 to 5 permil higher than today. This finding provided a strong proof for the previously proposed hypothesis of the more efficient biological pump in the Southern Ocean, driving lower pCO2 during the ice ages. Stronger vertical stratification in the Antarctic and higher iron supply in the Subantarctic zones are the two likely reasons for the more efficient surface nitrate uptake during the LGM than occurs in the modern Southern Ocean.

The trends defined by the CB-del15N in the Southern Ocean corals were comparable to the previously published del15N records of diatom- and foraminifera-bound ON from both the Antarctic and Subantarctic zones, validating the reliability of the fossil deep-sea corals as paleo-archives. However, higher temporal resolution afforded by the DSC revealed a previously unnoticed feature: the CB-del15N in the Antarctic Zone continued to decrease through the Holocene, pointing to the ongoing decline in the nitrate uptake efficiency. One possible mechanism driving this change is the intensifying overturning of the Southern Ocean, which might have contributed to the rise in atmospheric pCO2 since 8 kyr.

For more information see the NSF award page

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Funding

Funding Source	Award
NSF Division of Ocean Sciences (NSF OCE)	OCE-1234664

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