



Saildrone 2019 Antarctica Circumnavigation

Data Visualization

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The Mission



Disclaimer

This work is not a scientific research study based on the data collected during the Saildrone mission in Antarctica. It is only a short data visualization project.

This project is also entirely personal. It does not involve or engage the responsibility of any organizations including:

- Saildrone
- My company Amanox Solutions

The Antarctica Mission

In 2019 Saildrone deployed a fleet of three unmanned surface vehicles (USV) around Antarctica. One of the objective of the mission was to gather data for scientists to better understand the Southern Ocean and build better weather and climate models; in particular, measuring the ocean's uptake of CO₂ emissions during the winter months.

Conditions are too harsh in the Southern Ocean during the winter months for scientific expedition ships. The use of Saildrone USVs was thus a unique opportunity to collect new data for scientists in places and times ships cannot visit, “enabling new key insights into ocean and climate processes.”²

Want to know more about the mission? [Read this article.](#)

The Datasets

I used 3 datasets:

- Both the Saildrone USV SD 1020 1-hour and 1-minute surface datasets. They contain the measurements from Saildrone's standard atmospheric and oceanographic sensor suite. They are available [here](#).
- The NOAA dataset. It contains measurements from NOAA's pCO₂ sensor suite. It is available [here](#).

Data Manipulation

Data points with missing latitude, longitudes or observations have been ignored.

About This Work

Unless mentioned, all the visualizations, graphical design, image and color editing are my own. Visualizations and calculations were computed using python in a Jupyter notebook available [here](#).



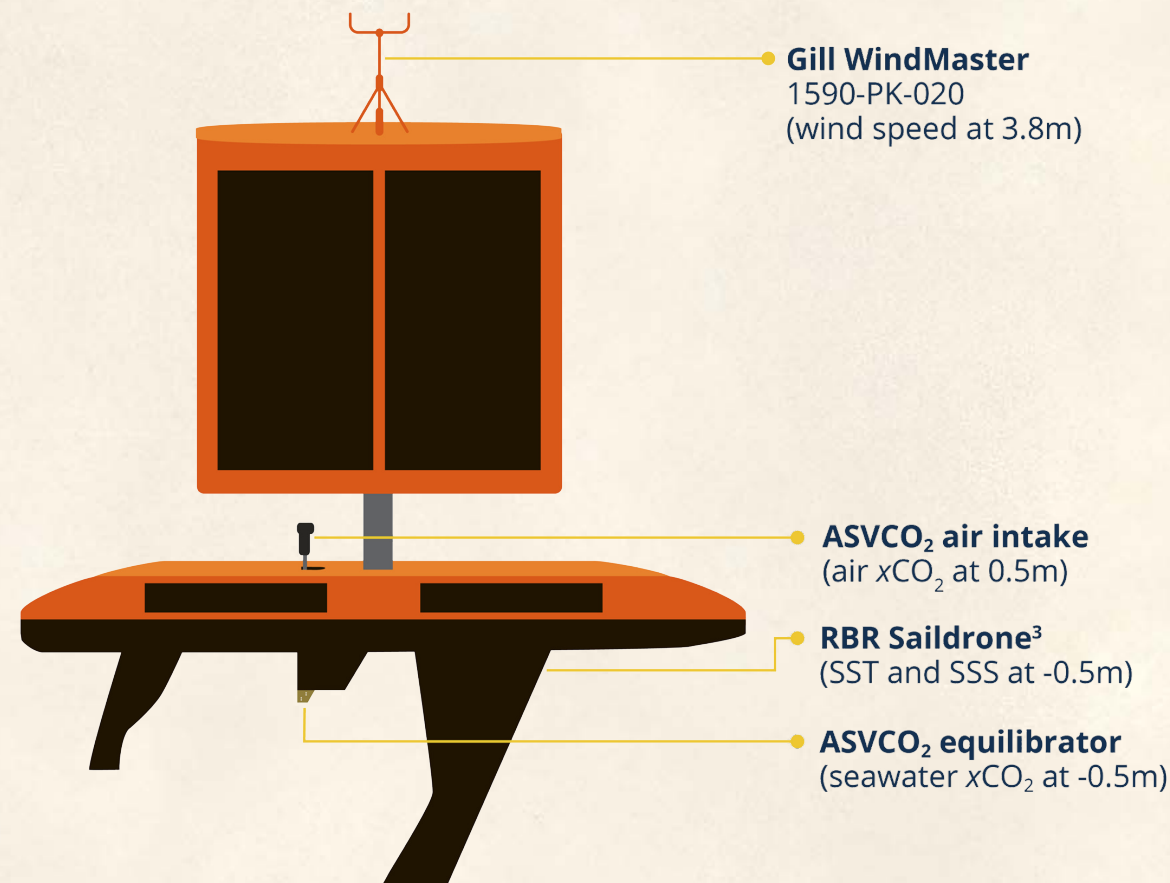
How USVs Measure CO₂ Flux



There are several techniques to measure or estimate the CO₂ flux, each having a different level of uncertainty.



The ocean's CO₂ flux is best measured by calculating the difference between direct sea and air CO₂ pressure measures. Saildrone USVs "address these observational challenges through remote surveying in harsh conditions with direct measurements of air-sea CO₂ pressure and wind speed"³.



This Schematic diagram of the 2019 Southern Ocean Saildrone Unmanned Surface Vehicle (USV) is from Geophysical Research Letters, volume 48 publication³

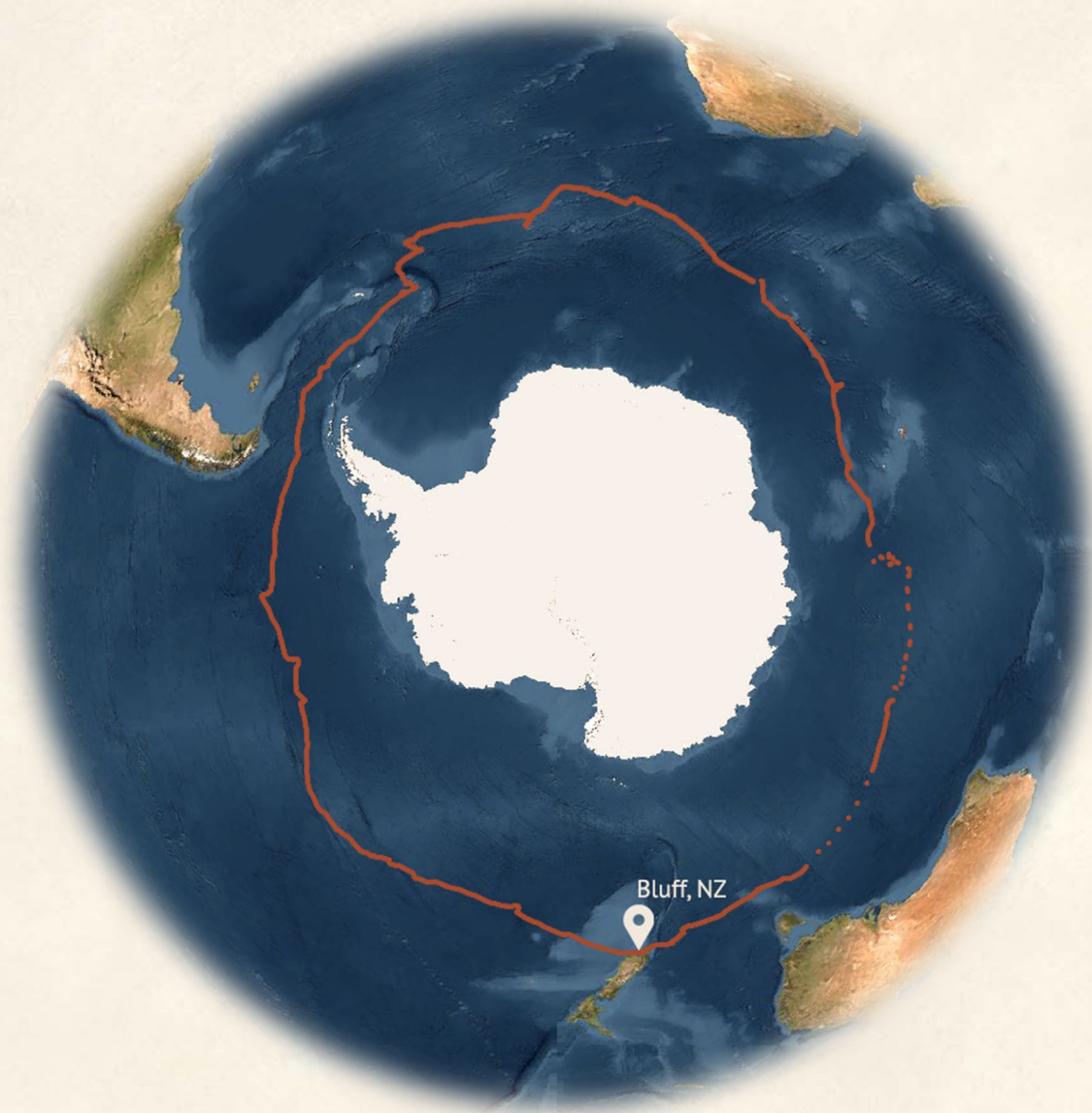
The Sailing Cruise...



The 3 Saildrone USVs left Southport in Bluff, New Zealand on January 2019. While 2 USVs had to quickly turn around for repair, the remaining one returned to port in August of the same year completing the first unmanned circumnavigation around Antarctica.

28,328* | **196**
kilometers | days

* Calculated by summing the pairwise haversine distance between all the data points. Due to the [coastline paradox](#), it makes a big difference compared to the announced 22,000 km.



... Was a Tough Journey



When launched, one of the USV was equipped with a rugged square wing specially designed “to deal with the huge forces of being rolled and submerged”² by the Southern Ocean’s breaking waves.

The other two USVs were equipped with the toughened regular Saildrone wing. In the first few days of the mission, they both suffered storm damage and had to sail back to port for repair before being redeployed with square wings.

Storms, howling winds, giant waves, freezing temperatures, the data show that the mission around Antarctica was not a pleasant cruise, even for drones.



* The USV anemometer was damaged in March 2019, providing only 3 months of wind speed measurements. The number of storms was thus calculated based on the number of periods with wave height > 9 meters (according to Beaufort scale)



5*

number of storms faced



31.9 m/s*

max gust wind speed

= “violent storm” on the Beaufort scale⁴



11.95 m

max wave height



-0.76°C

min air temperature

Southern Ocean CO₂ Flux

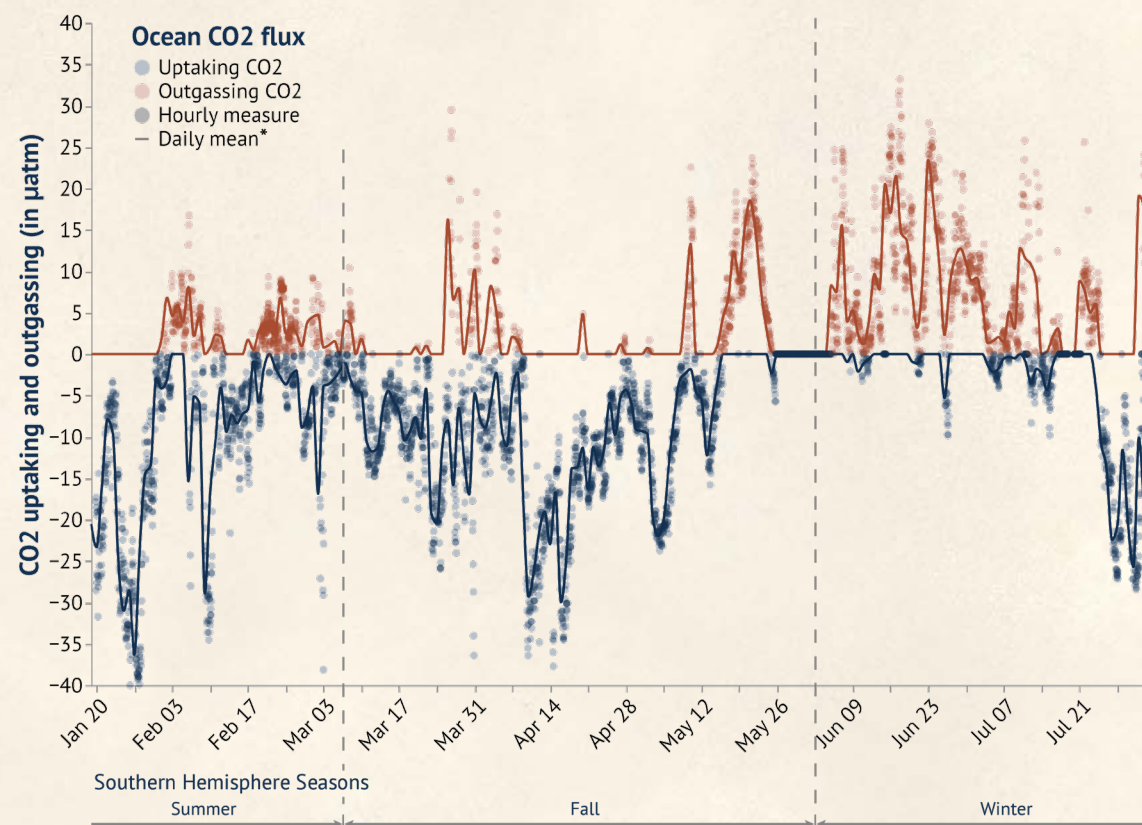


The data collected during the mission, show CO₂ outgassing throughout, but was prevalent during the southern hemisphere late fall and early winter.

According to A. J. Sutton et al.³, the measures performed by the Saildrone USV, challenge the idea that the Southern Ocean is as a strong carbon sink than traditionally considered.



The Southern Ocean was Outgassing CO₂ Mainly During Late Fall and Early Winter



* For the mean lines, missing data points are zeroed-out

Factors Influencing CO₂ Flux



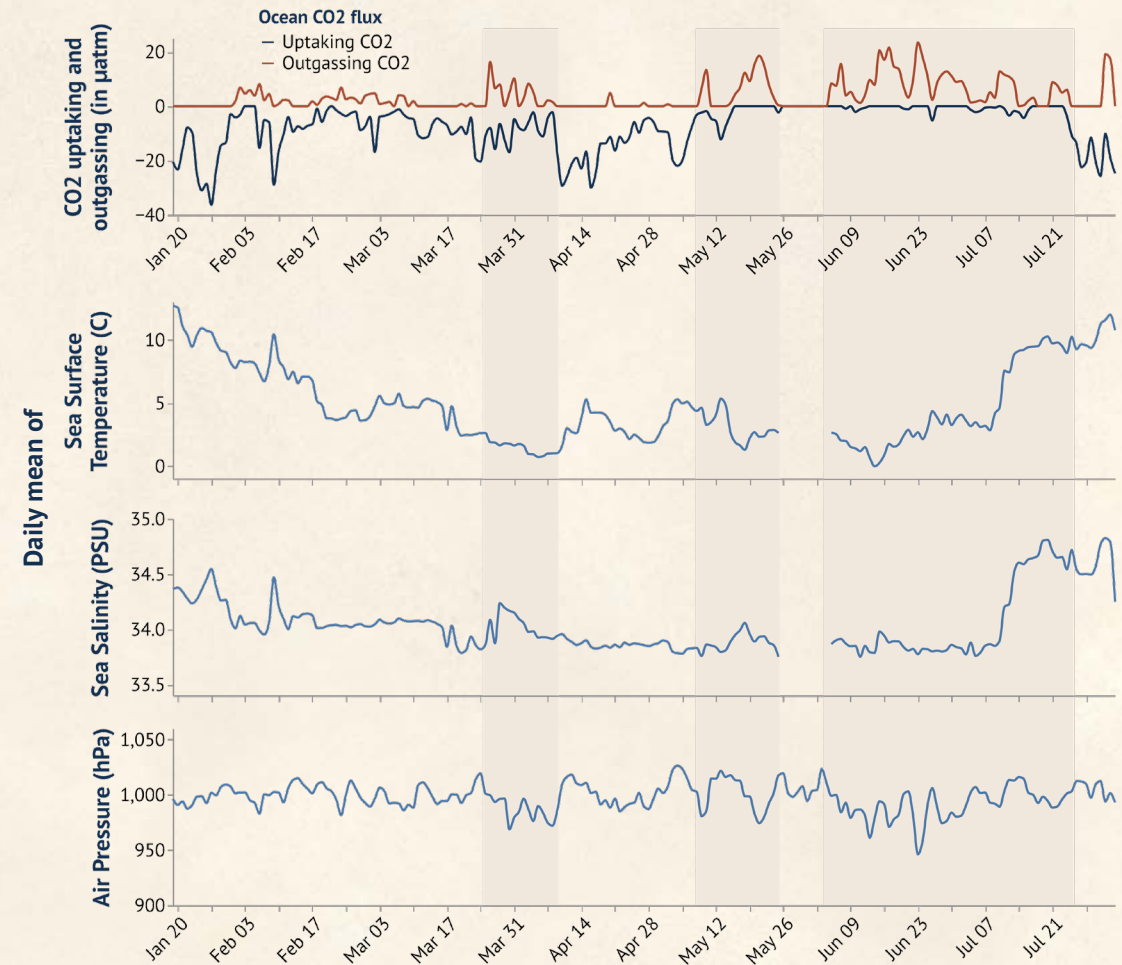
Although CO₂ outgassing appears prevalent during colder seasons the correlation between CO₂ outgassing and sea temperature is not obvious. A simple comparison of the variation of CO₂ flux with other environment factors show no obvious correlation with any of them. The question remains thus opened.

The Southern Ocean is estimated to account for 40% of the global ocean carbon uptake, and climate change is predicted to further impact the ocean's role of a carbon sink³. Getting more insights through such missions, into the oceans' role in the climate system, seems crucial for scientist to better understand and model the changes that await us.



* CO₂ uptaking and outgassing daily means have been zeroed-out for missing data points

No Clear Correlation With Other Factors



References & Credits



References

1. “Saildrone in the Southern Ocean”. *Saildrone*. <https://vimeo.com/565674133>. Accessed on 21st November 2021.
2. “Unmanned Vehicle Completes Antarctica Circumnavigation”. *Saildrone*. <http://www.saildrone.com/news/unmanned-vehicle-completes-antarctica-circumnavigation>. Accessed on 21st November 2021.
3. A. J. Sutton, N. L. Williams, B. Tilbrook. “Constraining Southern Ocean CO2 Flux Uncertainty Using Uncrewed Surface Vehicle Observations”. *Geophysical Research Letters*, 48, e2020GL091748. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2020GL091748>. 19 January 2021.
4. “Beaufort scale”. *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaufort_scale. Accessed on 21st November 2021.

Credits

- The front page and graphical theme of this presentation is a personal edit of the woodblock print 神奈川冲浪裏 (Under the Wave off Kanagawa) by ukiyo-e artist Hokusai
- The schematic diagram of Saildrone on page 3 is from A. J. Sutton et al. *Geophysical Research Letters* (2021) publication³
- Icons come from Microsoft PowerPoint standard icon library, except for the float which is self made.

