

SOLAR INDICES BULLETIN

MAY 2006

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♦ SOLAR RADIO EMISSIONS

The quiet Sun emits radio energy with a slowly varying intensity. These radio fluxes, which stem from atmospheric layers high in the chromosphere and low in the corona, change gradually from day-to-day, in response to the number and size of spot groups on the solar disk. The table below gives daily measurements of this slowly varying emission at selected wavelengths between about 1 and 100 centimeters. Many observatories record quiet-sun radio fluxes at the same local time each day and correct them to within a few percent for factors such as antenna gain, bursts in progress, atmospheric absorption, and sky background temperature. At 2800 megahertz (10.7 centimeters) flux observations summed over the Sun's disk have been made continuously since February 1947.

♦ SOLAR FLUX TABLE

Numbers in parentheses in the column headings below denote frequencies in megahertz. Each entry is given in solar flux units—a measure of energy received per unit time, per unit area, per unit frequency interval. One solar

flux unit equals $10^{-22} \text{ J/m}^2\text{Hzsec}$. During low periods of solar activity, the flux never falls to zero, because the Sun emits at all wavelengths with or without the presence of spots. The lowest daily Ottawa flux since 1947 occurred on November 3, 1954. On that day the observed noon value dropped to 62.6 units; the highest observed value of 457.0 occurred on April 7, 1947.

The preliminary observed and adjusted Penticton fluxes tabulated here are the "Series C" values reported by Canada's Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory in Penticton, British Columbia. Observed numbers are less refined, since they contain fluctuations as large as $\pm 7\%$ from the continuously changing sun-earth distance. Adjusted fluxes have this variation removed; they show the energy received at the mean distance between the Sun and Earth. Gaps in the Palehua, Hawaii (PALE), data reflect equipment problems. Fluxes measured either at Sagamore Hill, Massachusetts, or at San Vito, Italy, will be substituted for frequencies at which many Palehua values are missing.

MAY 2006 PRELIMINARY SUNSPOT NUMBERS AND SOLAR RADIO FLUX

Day	Sunspot Number	Obs Flux Pentic (2800)	Solar Flux Adjusted to 1 Astronomical Unit								
			PALE (15400)	PALE (8800)	PALE (4995)	Pentic (2800)	PALE (2695)	PALE (1415)	PALE (610)	PALE (410)	PALE (245)
01	33	93	501	235	149	94	98	56	36	22	10
02	35	89	474	224	142	90	95	54	35	20	10
03	34	89	475	214	139	90	94	53	33	19	10
04	36	92	493	241	148	93	—	54	35	25	10
05	32	87	504	231	146	88	93	52	34	21	10
06	27	87	496	231	146	88	61	50	35	21	12
07	32	86	496	234	144	87	94	50	34	23	11
08	28	85	485	231	142	86	89	51	35	24	20
09	28	83	486	228	139	84	86	50	33	24	15
10	19	78	492	227	137	79	84	44	—	—	—
11	16	76	493	222	132	77	83	44	—	—	—
12	7	76	480	221	135	77	79	43	33	20	9
13	7	74	495	227	131	75	79	45	32	20	10
14	0	72	496	222	134	73	77	41	32	21	11
15	0	72	492	221	133	73	75	40	31	21	9
16	0	72	490	221	130	73	76	40	32	21	10
17	0	72	458	211	126	73	78	39	24	23	8
18	8	73	492	220	133	74	77	41	31	20	10
19	8	75	495	231	139	76	80	43	31	23	11
20	19	76	492	224	135	77	83	44	32	21	10
21	20	78	496	223	139	79	83	45	32	21	10
22	28	83	495	235	140	85	88	49	32	22	9
23	30	84	487	227	142	86	87	50	35	22	10
24	26	84	490	226	136	86	89	49	33	22	10
25	25	84	498	234	140	86	87	50	36	24	13
26	28	82	483	232	139	84	85	51	36	23	10
27	32	83	501	237	142	85	90	51	37	25	10
28	37	85	469	229	142	87	90	50	36	25	10
29	35	81	486	234	143	83	88	51	35	24	10
30	32	80	492	230	135	82	84	47	36	23	10
	27	78	494	230	135	80	82	47	33	23	10
Mean	22.2	81	490	228	138	82	84	48	33	22	11

APR 2006 FINAL FLUX

Observed Pentic (2800)	Adjusted Pentic (2800)
87.0	86.9
91.1	91.1
100.4	100.4
99.5	99.6
99.0	99.1
98.9	99.1
94.5	94.7
91.0	91.3
89.2	89.5
88.7	89.1
89.7	90.1
81.1	81.6
80.0	80.5
78.9	79.4
78.4	78.9
76.5	77.0
77.9	78.5
75.8	76.5
75.8	76.5
78.6	79.3
79.2	80.0
82.4	83.2
86.7	87.7
92.8	93.9
95.1	96.3
100.0	101.3
100.7	102.0
100.1	101.5
101.2	102.7
99.9	101.4
89.0	89.6

◆ **SUNSPOT COUNTS**

In 1848 the Swiss astronomer Johann Rudolph Wolf introduced a daily measurement of sunspot number. His method, which is still used today, counts the total number of spots visible on the face of the Sun and the number of groups into which they cluster, because neither quantity alone satisfactorily measures the level of sunspot activity.

An observer computes a daily sunspot number by multiplying his estimated number of groups by ten and then adding this product to his total count of individual spots. Results, however, vary greatly, since the measurement strongly depends on observer interpretation and experience and on the stability of the Earth's atmosphere above the observing site. Moreover, the use of Earth as a platform from which to record these numbers contributes to their variability, too, because the Sun rotates and the evolving spot groups are distributed unevenly across solar longitudes. To compensate for these limitations, each daily international number is computed as a weighted average of measurements made from a network of

cooperating observatories. The international sunspot numbers tabulated on page 1 are provisional values taken from a bulletin prepared monthly by Pierre Cugnon of the SUNSPOT INDEX DATA CENTER, 3 avenue Circulaire, B-1180 BRUXELLES, BELGIUM. The May 2006 data combine observations from 47 stations. (<http://sidc.oma.be>)

◆ **HISTORICAL SUNSPOT COUNTS**

How do sunspot numbers in the table on page 1 compare to the largest values ever recorded? The highest daily count on record occurred December 24-25, 1957. On each of those days the sunspot number totaled 355. In contrast, during years near the spot cycle minimum, the count can fall to zero. Today, much more sophisticated measurements of solar activity are made routinely, but none has the link with the past that sunspot numbers have. Our archives, for example, include reconstructed daily values from January 8, 1818; monthly means from January 1749; and yearly means beginning in 1700.

SMOOTHED (OBSERVED AND PREDICTED) SUNSPOT NUMBERS: CYCLES 22 AND 23

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Mean
1993	71	69	67	64	60	56	55	52	48	45	41	38	56
1994	37	35	34	34	33	31	29	27	27	27	26	26	30
1995	24	23	22	21	19	18	17	15	13	12	11	11	17
1996	10	10	10	9	8*	9	8	8	8	9**	10	10	9
1997	10	11	14	17	18	20	23	25	28	32	35	39	23
1998	44	49	53	57	59	62	65	68	70	71	73	78	62
1999	83	85	84	86	91	93	94	98	103	108	111	111	96
2000	113	117	120	120.7#	119	119	120	119	116	115	113	112	117
2001	109	104	105	108	109	110	112	114	114	114	115	115	111
2002	114	115	113	111	109	106	103	99	95	91	85	82	102
2003	81	79	74	70	68	65	62	60	60	58	57	55	66
2004	52	49	47	46	44	42	40	39	38	36	35	34	42
2005	35	34	34	32	29	29	29	27	26	26	25	24	29
												(1)	(0)
2006	23	22	21	21	20	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	19
	(3)	(5)	(5)	(6)	(6)	(7)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(9)	(9)	(9)	(7)
2007	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	14	15	16	16	14
	(9)	(9)	(9)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(14)	(16)	(17)	(19)	(21)	(13)

*May 1996 marks Cycle 22's mathematical minimum. **October 1996 marks the consensus Cycle 22 minimum which NGDC is now using.

April 2000 marks Cycle 23 maximum.

◆ **SUNSPOT NUMBER PREDICTIONS**

For the end of Solar Cycle 22, and the beginning of Cycle 23, the table gives smoothed sunspot numbers up to the one calculated that first uses the most recently measured monthly mean. These smoothed, observed values are based on final, unsmoothed monthly means through Dec 2005 and on provisional ones thereafter. We compute a smoothed monthly mean by forming the arithmetic average of two sequential 12-month running means of monthly means.

Table entries with numbers in parentheses below them denote predictions by the McNish-Lincoln method. This method estimates future numbers by adding a correction to the mean of all cycles that is proportional to the departure of earlier values of the current cycle from the mean cycle. (See page 9 in the July 1987 supplement to *Solar-Geophysical Data*). We use and predict only smoothed monthly means, because we believe the errors are too great to estimate any values more precise. In the table above,

adding the number in parentheses to the predicted value generates the upper limit of the 90% confidence interval; subtracting the number from the predicted value generates the lower limit. Consider, for example the November 2006 prediction. There exists a 90% chance that in November 2006, the actual smoothed sunspot number will fall somewhere between 6 and 24.

The McNish-Lincoln prediction method generates useful estimates of smoothed, monthly mean sunspot numbers for no more than 12 months ahead. Beyond a year these predictions regress rapidly toward the mean of all 13 cycles used in the computation. Moreover, the method is very sensitive to the date defined as the beginning of the current sunspot cycle, that is, to the date of the most recent sunspot minimum. The new cycle predictions tabulated above are based on the consensus minimum value of 8.8 that occurred in October 1996. For solar maximum discussions, visit <http://www.sec.noaa.gov>.

Although every effort has been made to ensure that these data are correct, we can assume no liability for any damages their inaccuracies might cause. The charge for a 1-year subscription to this monthly bulletin is US\$17.00. To become a subscriber, you may either call (303) 497-6346 or write the NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER, Solar-Terrestrial Physics Division (E/GC2), 325 Broadway, Boulder, Colorado 80305-3328 USA. Please include with your written order a cheque or money order payable in U.S. currency to the "Department of Commerce, NOAA/NGDC". Payment may also be made through VISA, MasterCard or American Express credit cards.