

From: John Ogden <j.ogden@AUCKLAND.AC.NZ>  
To: ITRDBFOR@LISTSERV.ARIZONA.EDU  
Subject: Re: Fwd: History and trees  
Date: Fri, 15 Nov 2002 16:15:25 +1300  
Reply-to: grissino@UTKUX.UTCC.UTK.EDU

Dear Professor Savidge, Hal Fritts's comments were, as always, to the point and gracious. I have much less patience with your ignorance and arrogance. The sampling and statistical procedures involved in the production of a cross-dated chronology are of course quite different to those used in a randomised experiment, but they are none-the-less logical, rigorous, science. We have been through all those arguments so many times - you are wasting everyone's time.  
John Ogden.

On Wed, 13 Nov 2002 13:16:20 -0700 "Harold C. Fritts" <hfritts@LTRR.ARIZONA.EDU> wrote:

> Dear Ron,  
> I respectfully disagree with you. We have reached out to you many times  
> and find little but judgmental response. I have worked with this group  
> for many years now and they are just as exact scientists as you. They  
> are interested in what the tree tells us about the earth and its history  
> and not as interested and experienced as you in how the tree works. I  
> agree with you to the extent that we must understand how the tree works  
> but I fear you have "created the reality that dendrochronologists are  
> stupid and beneath your greatness" and that it will not ever change.  
>  
> People like you in the past such as Waldo Glock and Sampson at Berkley,  
> CA made similar statements. When I was a young man, I set out trying to  
> examine their criticism objectively with both physiological  
> investigations and statistical analysis. I found that these criticisms  
> could be met with data from solid physiological tests and even though  
> those practicing the science at that time were astronomers, not  
> physiologists. There are talented and insightful people in other  
> sciences outside of plant physiology.  
>  
> I am sorry for all of our sakes. as the future holds many possibilities  
> with many experts contributing to the future of science. If you could  
> only get outside the judgmental ideas that you hold about us, I think  
> you might be very surprised and pleased.  
>  
> Yes, I think many in this group oversimplify the response of the tree,  
> but in the same way you oversimplify the practice of dendrochronology.  
> We all have much to learn from each other, but calling each other names  
> doesn't further anyone's science.  
>  
> I believe science is embarking on a course of greater cooperation among  
> different disciplines. This implies respect and cooperation in both  
> directions. We welcome your interest in dendrochronology but are  
> saddened that you have so little respect for our integrity and honesty.  
> It would be more appreciated if we could together work for a better  
> future, not just quarrel, call each other names and delve on what is  
> wrong with the past.  
>  
> Sincerely, Regretfully and Lovingly,  
> Hal Fritts  
>  
> P.S.  
> One other comment to my fellow scientists. I agree with Frank that I  
> have made only a start at understanding the basis for tree ring  
> formation. It will take much more work in physiology and modeling. In  
> current discussions and debates on the importance of physiology and  
> process modeling in dendrochronology, understanding plant processes  
> often takes secondary impotence in the eyes of many  
> dendrochronologists. I think this will change because I believe in the  
> integrity of my colleagues, but I sometimes wonder how long this will  
> take. I had at one time hoped that I might see it happen. We can

> answer such criticism, but not until we investigate further how the tree  
> responds to its environment and how the tree lays down layers of cells  
> we call the tree ring. Physiologists outside dendrochronology have  
> little inclination to do it for us as this message reveals. We can and  
> must do it ourselves by including, welcoming and funding physiological  
> investigation in tree-ring research.  
> HCF  
>  
>  
> Rod Savidge wrote:  
> >  
> > To the Editor, New York Times  
> >  
> > Indeed, its activities  
> > include subjective interpretations of what does and what does not  
> > constitute an annual ring, statistical manipulation of data to fulfill  
> > subjective expectations, and discarding of perfectly good data sets when  
> > they contradict other data sets that have already been accepted. Such  
> > massaging of data cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered  
> > science; it merely demonstrates a total lack of rigor attending so-called  
> > dendrochronology "research".  
> >  
> > I would add that it is the exceptionally rare dendrochronologist who has  
> > ever shown any inclination to understand the fundamental biology of wood  
> > formation, either as regulated intrinsically or influenced by extrinsic  
> > factors. The science of tree physiology will readily admit that our  
> > understanding of how trees make wood remains at quite a rudimentary state  
> > (despite several centuries of research). On the other hand, there are many  
> > hundreds, if not thousands, of publications by dendrochronologists  
> > implicitly claiming that they do understand the biology of wood formation,  
> > as they have used their data to imagine when past regimes of water,  
> > temperature, pollutants, CO2, soil nutrients, and so forth existed. Note  
> > that all of the counts and measurements on tree rings in the world cannot  
> > substantiate anything unequivocally; they are merely observations. It  
> > would be a major step forward if dendrochronology could embrace the  
> > scientific method.  
> >  
> > sincerely,  
> > RA Savidge, PhD  
> > Professor, Tree Physiology/Biochemistry  
> > Forestry & Environmental Management  
> > University of New Brunswick  
> > Fredericton, NB E3B 6C2  
> >  
> > >X-Sieve: cmu-sieve 2.0  
> > >X-Mailer: Microsoft Outlook, Build 10.0.4024  
> > >Importance: Normal  
> > >Date: Tue, 12 Nov 2002 23:24:03 -0500  
> > >Reply-To: grissino@UTKUX.UTCC.UTK.EDU  
> > >Sender: ITRDB Dendrochronology Forum <ITRDBFOR@LISTSERV.ARIZONA.EDU>  
> > >From: "David M. Lawrence" <dave@FUZZO.COM>  
> > >Subject: History and trees  
> > >Comments: To: scitimes@nytimes.com  
> > >To: ITRDBFOR@LISTSERV.ARIZONA.EDU  
> > >  
> > >I was rather horrified by the inaccurate statements about tree-ring  
> > >dating that you allowed to slip into print in the interview with Thomas  
> > >Pakenham today. Tree-ring science is an exact science -- none of the  
> > >data obtained from tree rings would be useful if the dates were  
> > >inaccurate. Dendrochronologists don't say much these days about how old  
> > >trees are because they are interested in more important questions --  
> > >such as "What can the tree rings tell us about our planet's past?"  
> > >  
> > >You at The New York Times should know something about tree rings. A  
> > >check on Lexis-Nexis shows that since 1980 you have run more than 100  
> > >stories in which the words "tree rings" appear in full text. Some of  
> > >the stories are irrelevant. But most are not, such as the July 13,  
> > >2002, story in which you misspell the name of Neil Pederson at  
> > >Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, or the March 26, 2002, story about a

> > >medieval climate warming detected in tree-ring data. I do not remember  
> > >tree-ring dating being labeled an "inexact" science in stories like  
> > >that.  
> > >  
> > >Did Walter Sullivan, who wrote a story about tree rings and drought on  
> > >September 2, 1980, ever question the "exact" nature of tree-ring dating?  
> > >He didn't seem to question it on June 7, 1994, when he wrote a story  
> > >about ash from Santorini and said that the ash cloud may have "persisted  
> > >long enough to stunt the growth of oak trees in Irish bogs and of  
> > >bristlecone pines in the White Mountains of California, producing  
> > >tightly packed tree rings." You really do have to know when those rings  
> > >were laid down before you can associate them with a specific volcanic  
> > >eruption.  
> > >  
> > >I tell you what. I am a member of the National Association of Science  
> > >Writers as well as a working dendrochronologist and occasionally paid-up  
> > >member of the Tree-Ring Society. If you feel the need for a refresher  
> > >course on tree-ring dating, I'll be more than happy to try to introduce  
> > >you to knowledgeable practioners in you neighborhood, such as Neil  
> > >Pederson (not Peterson) at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. (It's  
> > >actually a local phone call for youse guys.)  
> > >  
> > >Sincerely,  
> > >  
> > >Dave Lawrence  
> > >  
> > >-----  
> > > David M. Lawrence | Home: (804) 559-9786  
> > > 7471 Brook Way Court | Fax: (804) 559-9787  
> > > Mechanicsville, VA 23111 | Email: dave@fuzzo.com  
> > > USA | http: http://fuzzo.com  
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> > >  
> > >"We have met the enemy and he is us." -- Pogo  
> > >  
> > >"No trespassing  
> > > 4/17 of a haiku" -- Richard Brautigan  
> > >  
> > >--  
> > >Harold C. Fritts, Professor Emeritus, Lab. of Tree-Ring Research  
> > >University of Arizona/ Owner of DendroPower  
> > >5703 N. Lady Lane, Tucson, AZ 85704-3905  
> > >Ph Voice: (520) 887 7291  
> > ><http://www.ltrr.arizona.edu/~hal>

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