

Analyzing the phase statistics of phenological records: fluctuations and correlations with temperature

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DY 38.1
DPG Frühjahrstagung 2011
Dresden; ZEU 255
17.3.2011 – 16:30



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Phenology: Introduction

- describes the timing of certain periodical development stages of species throughout the year
(I.L. Hudson, Climatic Change 100, 2010)
- e.g. flowering, fruit ripening, leaf coloring, foliation
- well-known concept in ecology

Motivation

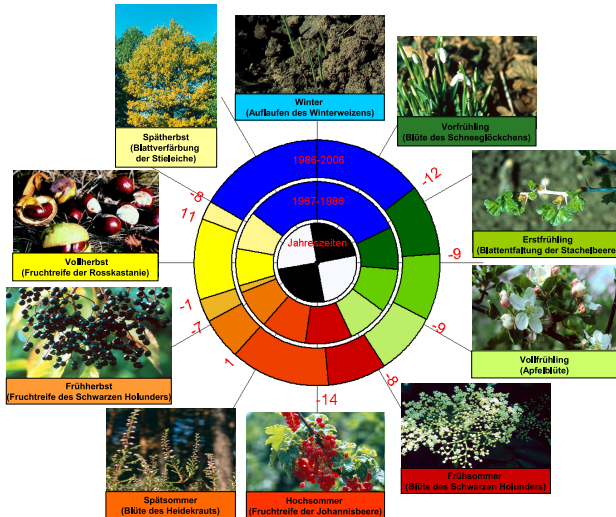


Figure: courtesy Anne Holsten

Phenology: some previous work

- phenological phases are sensitive to temperature
- shifts of phases indicate change of climate
- earlier onset of plant phases of 3.8 days per 1°C (Europe) (N. Estrella et al., Clim. Res. 39, 2009)
 - negative shifts for spring phases
 - positive shifts for fall phases
- cherry blossom in Kyoto advanced by 7 days (1971-2000) (Y. Aono, K. Kazui, Int. J. Climatology 28, 2008)

Phenology: our approach

- previous studies concentrate on response of specific phases or groups
- no integrated approach assessing changes
- **we describe the system from a statistical physics view point**
- **propose a phenological index**
- **simultaneously characterizes shifts of spring and fall phases**

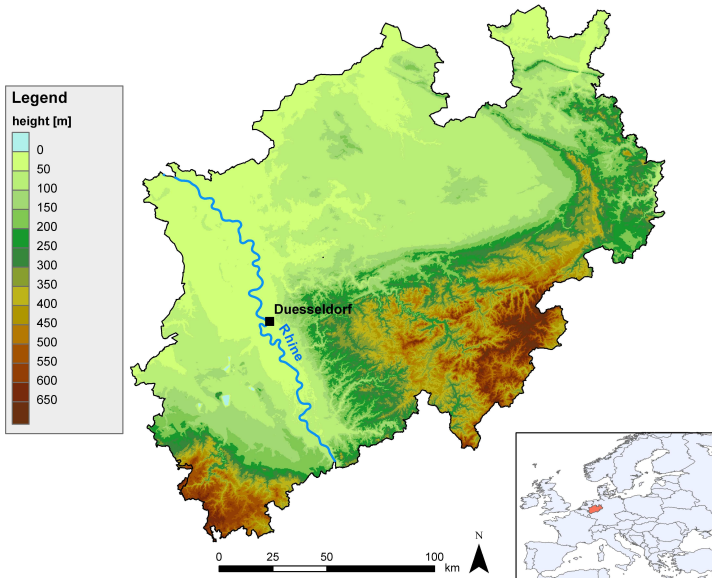
Phenological records

North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW)

- collected by the German Weather Services (DWD)
- observations by volunteers (2-3 times per week)
- 1951-2006
- 75 phases (159)
- 17 sites in NRW (660)

also: records of annual mean temperature

North Rhine-Westphalia



Fluctuations

First, we want to study how strongly phenological phases fluctuate. Therefore, we apply the Rayleigh measure:

$$\sigma_{\phi} = \sqrt{\langle \cos \phi \rangle^2 + \langle \sin \phi \rangle^2},$$

where $\langle \cdot \rangle$ is the average over time, separately for each phenological plant.

Fluctuations

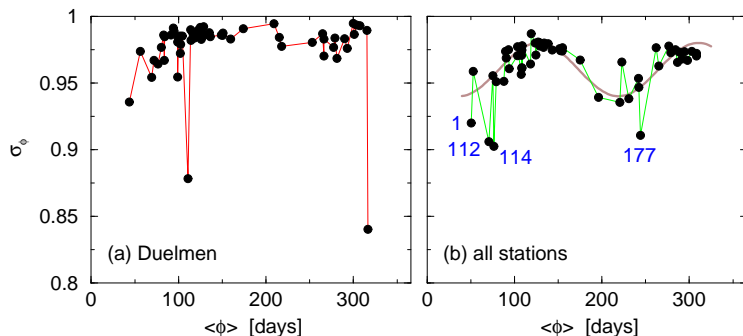


Figure: 1: Hazel, *Corylus Avellana*: flowering; 112: European Alder, *Alnus Glutinosa*: flowering; 114: Cornel Cherry, *Cornus Mas*: flowering; and 177: Wild Brier, *Rosa Canina*: fruit ripening.

Method

For the phase $\phi_{p,t}$, i.e. the day of the year when the phenological event p occurs in year t , we consider the phase anomaly

$$\varphi_{p,t} = \phi_{p,t} - \langle \phi \rangle_p,$$

where $\langle \cdot \rangle$ denotes the average over time and $\langle \phi \rangle$ is defined by $\tan \langle \phi \rangle := \frac{\langle \sin \phi \rangle}{\langle \cos \phi \rangle}$.

Linear regression to $\varphi_{p,t}$ against $\langle \phi \rangle_p$:

$$\varphi_{p,t}^* = \alpha_t \langle \phi \rangle_p + \beta_t.$$

Eliminating φ one obtains

$$\phi = \langle \phi \rangle (\alpha + 1) + \beta,$$

i.e. α corresponds to a temporary change of frequency.

example: $\varphi = \phi - \langle \phi \rangle$ vs. $\langle \phi \rangle$

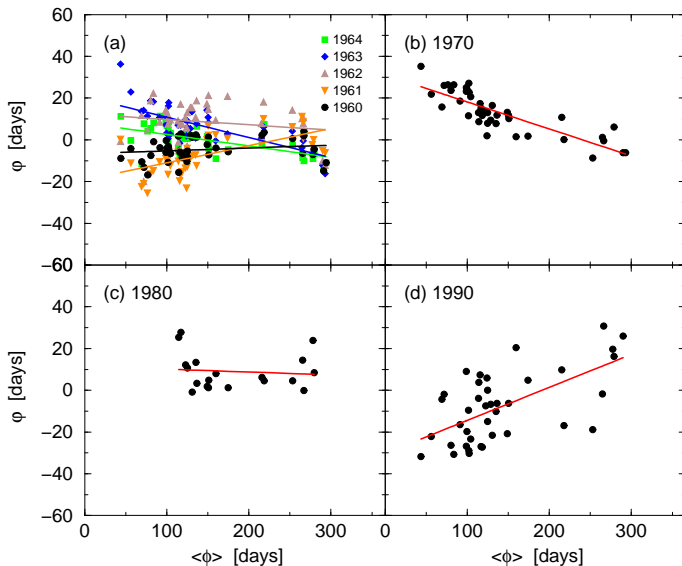


Figure: Dülmen near Münster

Schematic illustration

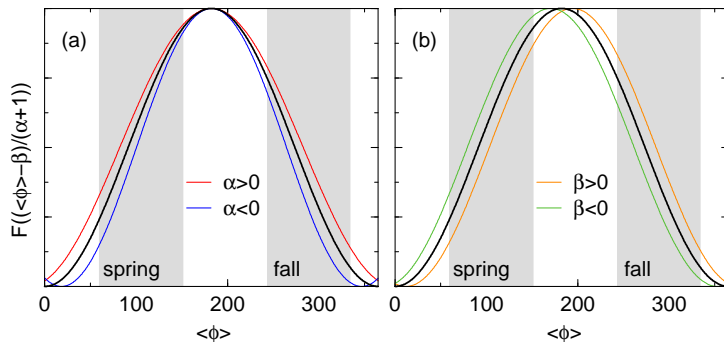


Figure: Idealized cycle of advantageous and disadvantageous phenological years as well as premature and delayed years.

Phenological Index

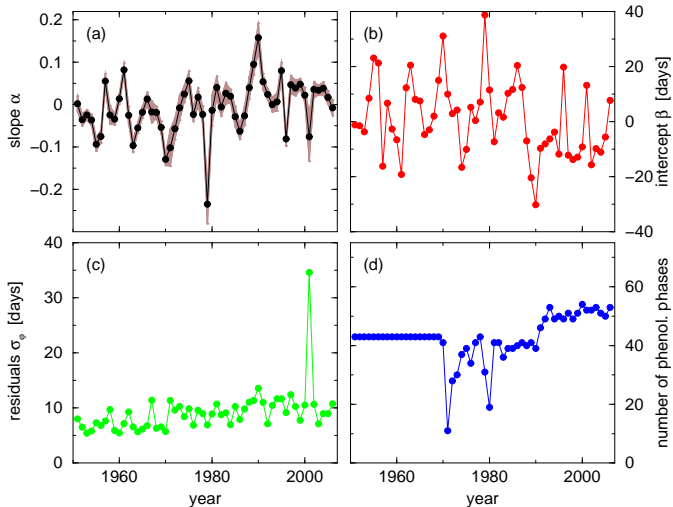


Figure: Dülmen 1951-2006. (a) slope α (pheno-index), (b) intercept β , (c) root mean square deviations from the fit σ_φ , and (d) number of phenological phases used for each year.

Comparison with temperature

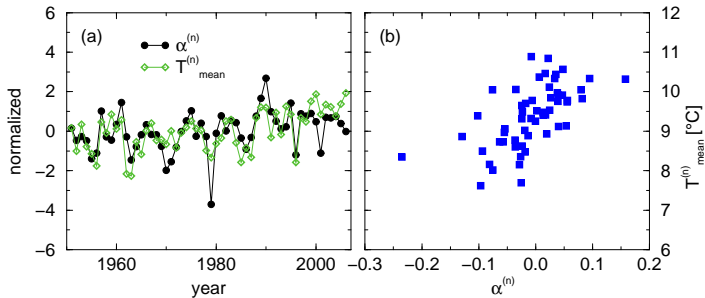
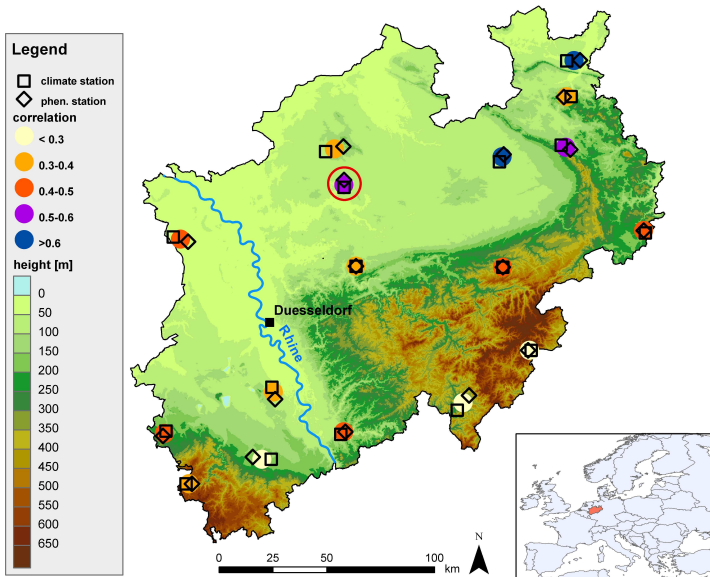


Figure: Dülmen 1951-2006: phenological index and annual mean temperature.

Correlations with mean temperature



Discussion and conclusions

Pheno-index & phenological cycle

Assuming $C(\phi) = A \sin(\phi + \lambda) + B$ and $\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} [A \sin(\langle \phi \rangle + \langle \lambda \rangle)] d\langle \phi \rangle = 0$ we find:

$$\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} [A \sin(\langle \phi \rangle(\alpha + 1) + \beta + \lambda)] d\langle \phi \rangle \approx 2\pi A\alpha \sim \alpha.$$

Phenological records

- regression to $\phi - \langle \phi \rangle$ versus $\langle \phi \rangle$ can be used to characterize anomalies of the phenological cycle.
- slope α represents a temporary change of frequency and intercept β a temporary phase shift.
- spring and late summer phases exhibit the largest fluctuations while the early summer and fall phases exhibit the smallest fluctuations.

Thank you for your attention!

D. Rybski et al., Physica A 390, 2011, 680-688.

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