Q9: What are the chlorine and bromine reactions that destroy stratospheric ozone?

Reactive gases containing chlorine and bromine destroy stratospheric ozone in "catalytic" cycles made up of two or more separate reactions. As a result, a single chlorine or bromine atom can destroy many hundreds of ozone molecules before it reacts with another gas, breaking the cycle. In this way, a small amount of reactive chlorine or bromine has a large impact on the ozone layer. Certain ozone destruction reactions become most effective in polar regions because the reactive gas chlorine monoxide reaches very high levels there in the late winter/early spring season.

Stratospheric ozone is destroyed by reactions involving *reactive halogen gases*, which are produced in the chemical conversion of *halogen source gases* (see Figure Q8-1). The most reactive of these gases are chlorine monoxide (ClO), bromine monoxide (BrO), and chlorine and bromine atoms (Cl and Br). These gases participate in three principal reaction cycles that destroy ozone.

Cycle 1. Ozone destruction Cycle 1 is illustrated in Figure Q9-1. The cycle is made up of two basic reactions: ClO + O and Cl + O_3. The net result of Cycle 1 is to convert one ozone molecule and one oxygen atom into two oxygen molecules. In each cycle, chlorine acts as a *catalyst* because ClO and Cl react and are reformed. In this way, one Cl atom participates in many cycles, destroying many ozone molecules. For typical stratospheric conditions at middle or low latitudes, a single chlorine atom can destroy hundreds of ozone molecules

before it happens to react with another gas, breaking the catalytic cycle.

Polar Cycles 2 and 3. The abundance of ClO is greatly increased in polar regions during winter as a result of reactions on the surfaces of polar stratospheric cloud (PSC) particles (see Q10). Cycles 2 and 3 (see Figure Q9-2) become the dominant reaction mechanisms for polar ozone loss because of the high abundances of ClO and the relatively low abundance of atomic oxygen (which limits the rate of ozone loss by Cycle 1). Cycle 2 begins with the self-reaction of ClO. Cycle 3, which begins with the reaction of ClO with BrO, has two reaction pathways to produce either Cl and Br or BrCl. The net result of both cycles is to destroy two ozone molecules and create three oxygen molecules. Cycles 2 and 3 account for most of the ozone loss observed in the Arctic and Antarctic stratospheres in the late winter/early spring
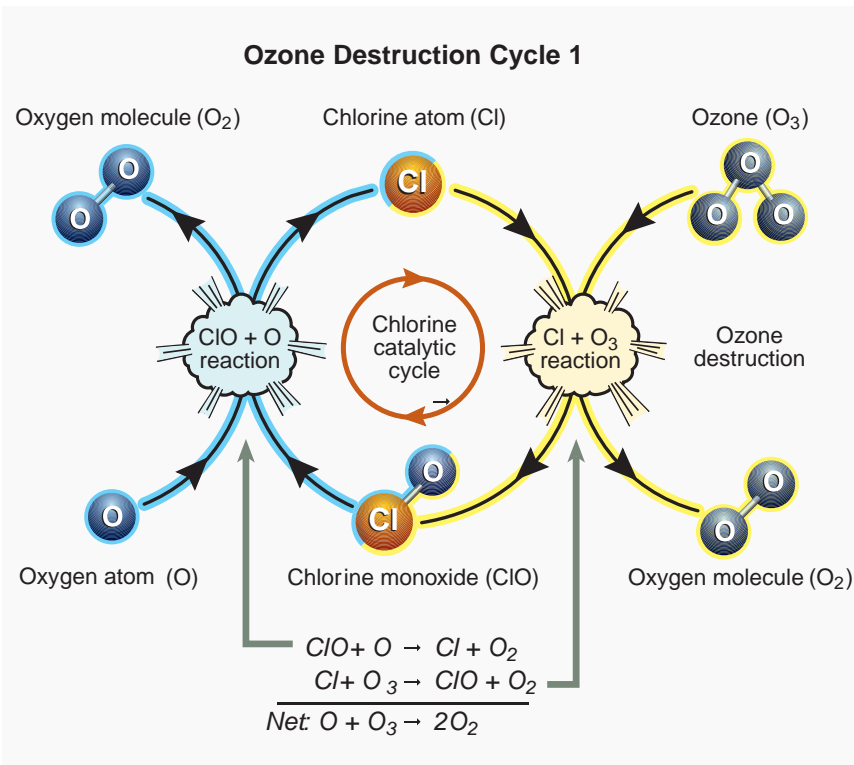

Ozone Destruction Cycle 1

Oxygen molecule (O_2)   Chlorine atom (Cl)   Ozone (O_3)

ClO + O reaction   Chlorine catalytic cycle   Cl + O_3 reaction   Ozone destruction

Oxygen atom (O)   Chlorine monoxide (ClO)   Oxygen molecule (O_2)

$$ClO + O \rightarrow Cl + O_2$$
$$Cl + O_3 \rightarrow ClO + O_2$$
$$Net: O + O_3 \rightarrow 2O_2$$

Figure Q9-1. Ozone destruction Cycle 1. The destruction of ozone in Cycle 1 involves two separate chemical reactions. The net or overall reaction is that of atomic oxygen with ozone, forming two oxygen molecules. The cycle can be considered to begin with either ClO or Cl. When starting with ClO, the first reaction is ClO with O to form Cl. Cl then reacts with (and thereby destroys) ozone and reforms ClO. The cycle then begins again with another reaction of ClO with O. Because Cl or ClO is reformed each time an ozone molecule is destroyed, chlorine is considered a catalyst for ozone destruction. Atomic oxygen (O) is formed when ultraviolet sunlight reacts with ozone and oxygen molecules. Cycle 1 is most important in the stratosphere at tropical and middle latitudes, where ultraviolet sunlight is most intense.
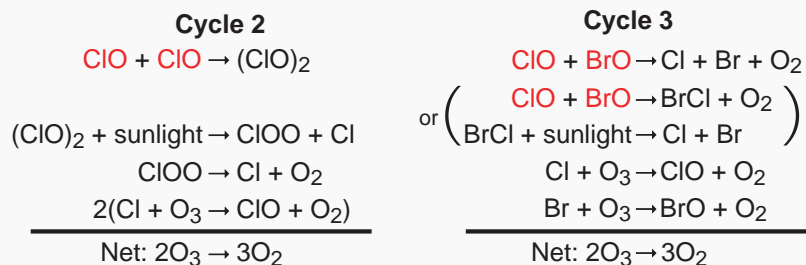
Ozone Destruction Cycles

Cycle 2

$$ClO + ClO \rightarrow (ClO)_2$$

$$(ClO)_2 + sunlight \rightarrow ClOO + Cl$$
$$ClOO \rightarrow Cl + O_2$$
$$\underline{2(Cl + O_3 \rightarrow ClO + O_2)}$$
$$Net: 2O_3 \rightarrow 3O_2$$

Cycle 3

$$ClO + BrO \rightarrow Cl + Br + O_2$$

$$or \left(\begin{array}{l} ClO + BrO \rightarrow BrCl + O_2 \\ BrCl + sunlight \rightarrow Cl + Br \end{array} \right)$$

$$Cl + O_3 \rightarrow ClO + O_2$$
$$\underline{Br + O_3 \rightarrow BrO + O_2}$$
$$Net: 2O_3 \rightarrow 3O_2$$

Figure Q9-2. Polar ozone destruction Cycles 2 and 3. Significant destruction of ozone occurs in polar regions because ClO abundances reach large values. In this case, the cycles initiated by the reaction of ClO with another ClO (Cycle 2) or the reaction of ClO with BrO (Cycle 3) efficiently destroy ozone. The net reaction in both cases is two ozone molecules forming three oxygen molecules. The reaction of ClO with BrO has two pathways to form the Cl and Br product gases. Ozone destruction Cycles 2 and 3 are catalytic, as illustrated for Cycle 1 in Figure Q9-1, because chlorine and bromine gases react and are reformed in each cycle. Sunlight is required to complete each cycle and to help form and maintain ClO abundances.

season (see Q11 and Q12). At high ClO abundances, the rate of ozone destruction can reach 2 to 3% per day in late winter/early spring.

Sunlight requirement. Sunlight is required to complete and maintain Cycles 1 through 3. Cycle 1 requires sunlight because atomic oxygen is formed only with ultraviolet sunlight. Cycle 1 is most important in the stratosphere at tropical and middle latitudes, where ultraviolet sunlight is most intense.

Cycles 2 and 3 require visible sunlight to complete the reaction cycles and to maintain ClO abundances. In the continuous darkness of winter in the polar stratospheres, reaction Cycles 2 and 3 cannot occur. It is only in late winter/early spring when sunlight returns to the polar regions that these cycles can occur. Therefore, the greatest destruction of ozone occurs in the partially to fully sunlit periods after midwinter in the polar stratospheres. The

visible sunlight needed in Cycles 2 and 3 is not sufficient to form ozone because this process requires ultraviolet sunlight. In the stratosphere in the late winter/early spring period, ultraviolet sunlight is weak because Sun angles are low. As a result, ozone is destroyed by Cycles 2 and 3 in the sunlit winter stratosphere but is not produced in significant amounts.

Other reactions. Global ozone abundances are controlled by many reactions that both produce and destroy ozone (see Q2). Chlorine and bromine catalytic reactions are but one group of ozone destruction reactions. Reactive hydrogen and reactive nitrogen gases, for example, are involved in other catalytic ozone-destruction cycles that also occur in the stratosphere. These reactions occur naturally in the stratosphere and their importance has not been as strongly influenced by human activities as have reactions involving halogens.

Q10: **Why has an "ozone hole" appeared over Antarctica when ozone-depleting gases are present throughout the stratosphere?**

Ozone-depleting gases are present throughout the stratospheric ozone layer because they are transported great distances by atmospheric air motions. The severe depletion of the Antarctic ozone layer known as the "ozone hole" occurs because of the special weather conditions that exist there and nowhere else on the globe. The very low temperatures of the Antarctic stratosphere create ice clouds called polar stratospheric clouds (PSCs). Special reactions that occur on PSCs and the relative isolation of polar stratospheric air allow chlorine and bromine reactions to produce the ozone hole in Antarctic springtime.

The severe depletion of stratospheric ozone in Antarctic winter is known as the "ozone hole" (see Q11). Severe depletion first appeared over Antarctica because atmospheric conditions there increase the effectiveness of ozone destruction by reactive halogen gases (see Q8). The formation of the Antarctic ozone hole requires abundant reactive halogen gases, temperatures low enough to form polar stratospheric clouds (PSCs), isolation of air from other stratospheric regions, and sunlight.

Distributing halogen gases. Halogen source gases emitted at Earth's surface are present in comparable abundances throughout the stratosphere in both hemispheres even though most of the emissions occur in the Northern Hemisphere. The abundances are comparable because most source gases have no important natural removal processes in the lower atmosphere and because winds and warm-air convection redistribute and mix air efficiently throughout the troposphere. Halogen gases (in the form of source gases and some reactive products) enter the stratosphere primarily from the tropical upper troposphere. Atmospheric air motions then transport them upward and toward the poles in both hemispheres.

Low temperatures. The severe ozone destruction represented by the ozone hole requires that low tempera-
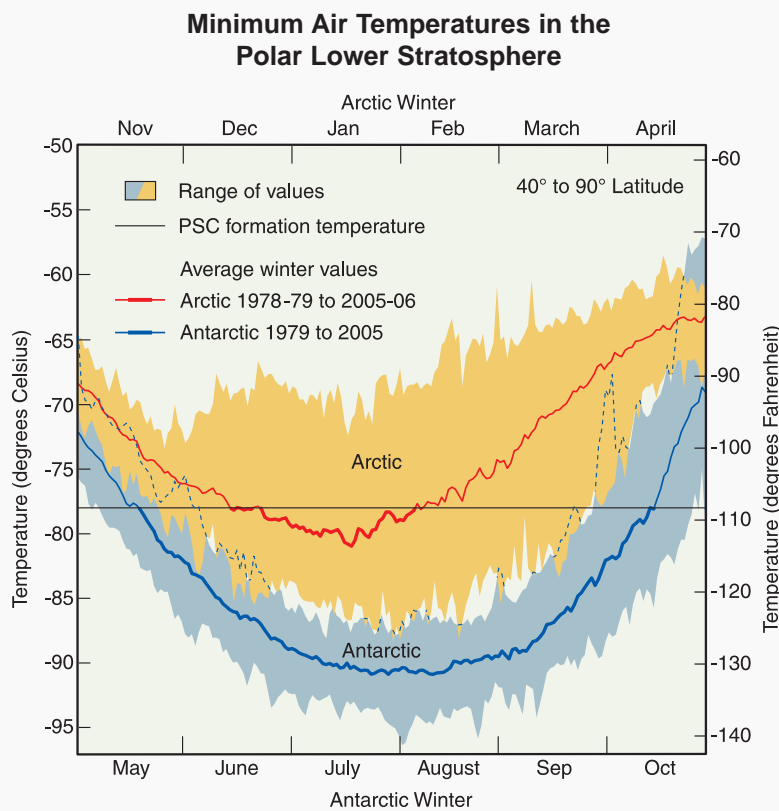

Figure Q10-1. Arctic and Antarctic temperatures. Stratospheric air temperatures in both polar regions reach minimum values in the lower stratosphere in the winter season. Average minimum values over Antarctica are as low as –90°C in July and August in a typical year. Over the Arctic, average minimum values are near –80°C in January and February. Polar stratospheric clouds (PSCs) are formed when winter minimum temperatures fall below the formation temperature (about –78°C). This occurs on average for 1 to 2 months over the Arctic and 5 to 6 months over Antarctica (see heavy red and blue lines). Reactions on PSCs cause the highly reactive chlorine gas ClO to be formed, which increases the destruction of ozone (see Q9). The range of winter minimum temperatures found in the Arctic is much greater than in the Antarctic. In some years, PSC formation temperatures are not reached in the Arctic, and significant ozone depletion does not occur. In the Antarctic, PSCs are present for many months, and severe ozone depletion now occurs in each winter season.

tures be present over a range of stratospheric altitudes, over large geographical regions, and for extended time periods. Low temperatures are important because they allow polar stratospheric clouds (PSCs) to form. Reactions on the surfaces of the cloud particles initiate a remarkable increase in the most reactive halogen gases (see below and Q8). Temperatures are lowest in the stratosphere over both polar regions in winter. In the Antarctic winter, minimum temperatures are generally lower and less variable than in the Arctic winter (see Figure Q10-1). Antarctic temperatures also remain below the PSC formation temperature for much longer periods during winter. This occurs, in part, because there are significant meteorological differences between the hemispheres, resulting from the differences in the distributions of land, ocean, and mountains at middle and high latitudes. The winter temperatures are low enough for PSCs to form for nearly the entire Antarctic winter but usually only for part of every Arctic winter.

Isolated conditions. Air in the polar stratospheric regions is relatively isolated from other stratospheric regions for long periods in the winter months. The isolation comes about because of strong winds that encircle the poles, preventing substantial motion of air in or out of the polar stratospheres. The isolation is much more effective in the Antarctic than the Arctic. Once chemical changes occur in the cold air as a result of the presence of PSCs, the changes remain for many weeks to months.

Polar stratospheric clouds (PSCs). Polar stratospheric clouds cause changes in the relative abundances of reactive chlorine gases. Reactions occur on the surfaces of PSC particles that convert the reservoir forms of reactive chlorine gases, $ClONO_2$ and HCl, to the most reactive form, ClO (see Figure Q8-1). ClO increases from a small fraction of available reactive chlorine gases to nearly all that is available (see Q8). With increased ClO, additional catalytic cycles involving ClO and BrO become active in the chemical destruction of ozone when sunlight is available (see Q9).

PSCs form when stratospheric temperatures fall below about –78°C (–108°F) in polar regions (see Figure Q10-1). As a result, PSCs are often found over large areas of the winter polar regions and over a significant altitude range. At low polar temperatures, nitric acid (HNO_3) and water condense on preexisting sulfur-containing particles to form solid and liquid PSC particles. At even lower temperatures, ice particles also form. PSC particles grow large enough and are numerous enough that cloud-like features can be observed from the ground under certain conditions, particularly when the Sun is near the horizon (see Figure Q10-2). PSCs are often found near mountain

ranges in polar regions because the motion of air over the mountains can cause local cooling of stratospheric air.

When temperatures increase by early spring, PSCs no longer form and the production of ClO ends. Without continued ClO production, ClO amounts decrease as other chemical reactions reform $ClONO_2$ and HCl. As a result, the intense period of ozone depletion ends.

PSC removal. Once formed, PSC particles move downward because of gravity. The largest particles move down several kilometers or more in the stratosphere during the low-temperature winter/spring period. Because most PSCs contain nitric acid, their downward motion removes nitric acid from regions of the ozone layer. That process is called *denitrification*. With less nitric acid, the

Arctic Polar Stratospheric Clouds

Figure Q10-2. Polar stratospheric clouds. This photograph of an Arctic polar stratospheric cloud (PSC) was taken from the ground at Kiruna, Sweden (67°N), on 27 January 2000. PSCs form during winters in the Arctic and Antarctic stratospheres. The particles grow from the condensation of water and nitric acid (HNO_3). The clouds often can be seen with the human eye when the Sun is near the horizon. Reactions on PSCs cause the highly reactive chlorine gas ClO to be formed, which is very effective in the chemical destruction of ozone (see Q9).

highly reactive chlorine gas ClO remains chemically active for a longer period, thereby increasing chemical ozone destruction. Denitrification occurs each winter in the Antarctic and in some, but not all, Arctic winters, because PSC formation temperatures are required over an extensive time period.

Discovering the role of PSCs. The formation of PSCs has been recognized for many years from ground-based observations. However, the geographical and altitude extent of PSCs in both polar regions was not known

fully until PSCs were observed by a satellite instrument in the late 1970s. The role of PSCs in converting reactive chlorine gases to ClO was not understood until after the discovery of the Antarctic ozone hole in 1985. Our understanding of the PSC role developed from laboratory studies of their surface reactivity, computer modeling studies of polar stratospheric chemistry, and sampling of PSC particles and reactive chlorine gases, such as ClO, in the polar stratospheric regions.

The Discovery of the Antarctic Ozone Hole

The first decreases in Antarctic total ozone were observed in the early 1980s over research stations located on the Antarctic continent. The measurements were made with ground-based Dobson spectrophotometers (see box in Q5). The observations showed unusually low total overhead ozone during the late winter/early spring months of September, October, and November. Total ozone was lower in these months compared with previous observations made as early as 1957. The early published reports came from the British Antarctic Survey and the Japan Meteorological Agency. The results became more widely known in the international community after three scientists from the British Antarctic Survey published them in the journal *Nature* in 1985. Soon after, satellite measurements confirmed the spring ozone depletion and further showed that in each late winter/early spring season starting in the early 1980s, the depletion extended over a large region centered near the South Pole. The term "ozone hole" came about from satellite images of total ozone that showed very low values encircling the Antarctic continent each spring (see Q11). Currently, the formation and severity of the Antarctic "ozone hole" are documented each year by a combination of satellite, ground-based, and balloon observations of ozone.

III. STRATOSPHERIC OZONE DEPLETION

Q11: How severe is the depletion of the Antarctic ozone layer?

Severe depletion of the Antarctic ozone layer was first observed in the early 1980s. Antarctic ozone depletion is seasonal, occurring primarily in late winter and early spring (August-November). Peak depletion occurs in early October when ozone is often completely destroyed over a range of altitudes, reducing overhead total ozone by as much as two-thirds at some locations. This severe depletion creates the "ozone hole" in images of Antarctic total ozone made from space. In most years the maximum area of the ozone hole far exceeds the size of the Antarctic continent.

The severe depletion of Antarctic ozone, known as the "ozone hole," was first observed in the early 1980s. The depletion is attributable to chemical destruction by reactive halogen gases, which increased in the stratosphere in the latter half of the 20th century (see Q16). Conditions in the Antarctic winter stratosphere are highly suitable for ozone depletion because of (1) the long periods of extremely low temperatures, which promote polar stratospheric cloud (PSC) formation; (2) the abundance of reactive halogen gases, which chemically destroy ozone; and (3) the isolation of stratospheric air during the winter, which allows time for chemical destruction to occur (see Q10). The severity of Antarctic ozone depletion can be seen using satellite observations of total ozone, ozone altitude profiles, and long-term average values of polar total ozone.

Antarctic ozone hole. The most widely used images of Antarctic ozone depletion are those from space-based measurements of total ozone. Satellite images made during Antarctic winter and spring show a large region centered near the South Pole in which total ozone is highly depleted (see Figure Q11-1). This region has come to be called the "ozone hole" because of the near-circular contours of low ozone values in the images. The area of the ozone hole is defined here as the area contained within the 220-Dobson unit (DU) contour in total ozone maps (light blue color in Figure Q11-1). The maximum area has reached 25 million square kilometers (about 10 million square miles) in recent years, which is nearly twice the area of the Antarctic continent (see Figure Q11-2). Minimum values of total ozone inside the ozone hole averaged in late September have reached below 100 DU, which is well below normal springtime values of about 200 DU (see Figure Q11-2).

Altitude profiles of Antarctic ozone. Ozone within the "ozone hole" is also measured using balloonborne instruments (see Q5). Balloon measurements show changes within the ozone layer, the vertical region that contains the highest ozone abundances in the stratosphere. At geographic locations where the lowest total ozone

values occur in ozone hole images, balloon measurements show that the chemical destruction of ozone is complete over a vertical region of several kilometers. Balloon
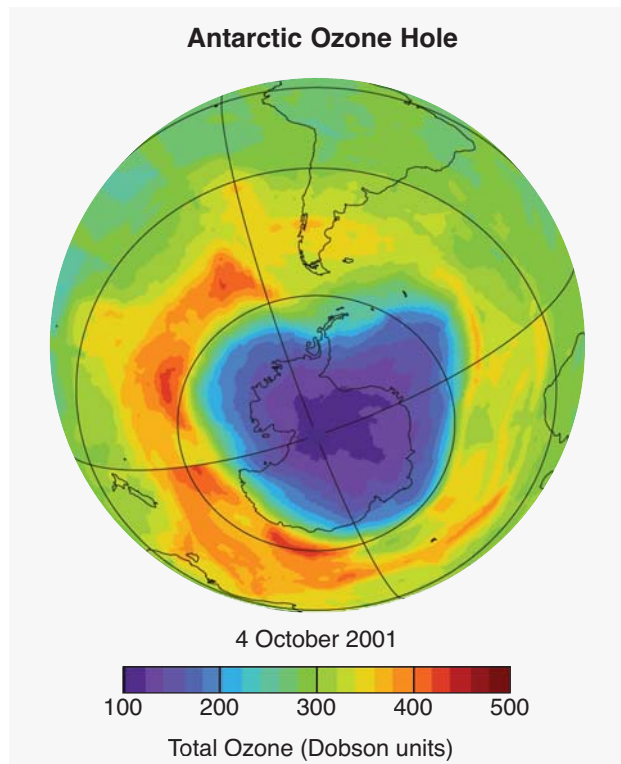

Antarctic Ozone Hole

4 October 2001

Total Ozone (Dobson units)
100   200   300   400   500

Figure Q11-1. Antarctic "ozone hole." Total ozone values are shown for high southern latitudes as measured by a satellite instrument. The dark blue and purple regions over the Antarctic continent show the severe ozone depletion or "ozone hole" now found during every spring. Minimum values of total ozone inside the ozone hole are close to 100 Dobson units (DU) compared with normal springtime values of about 200 DU (see Q4). In late spring or early summer (November-December) the ozone hole disappears in satellite images as ozone-depleted air is displaced and mixed with ozone-rich air transported poleward from outside the ozone hole.
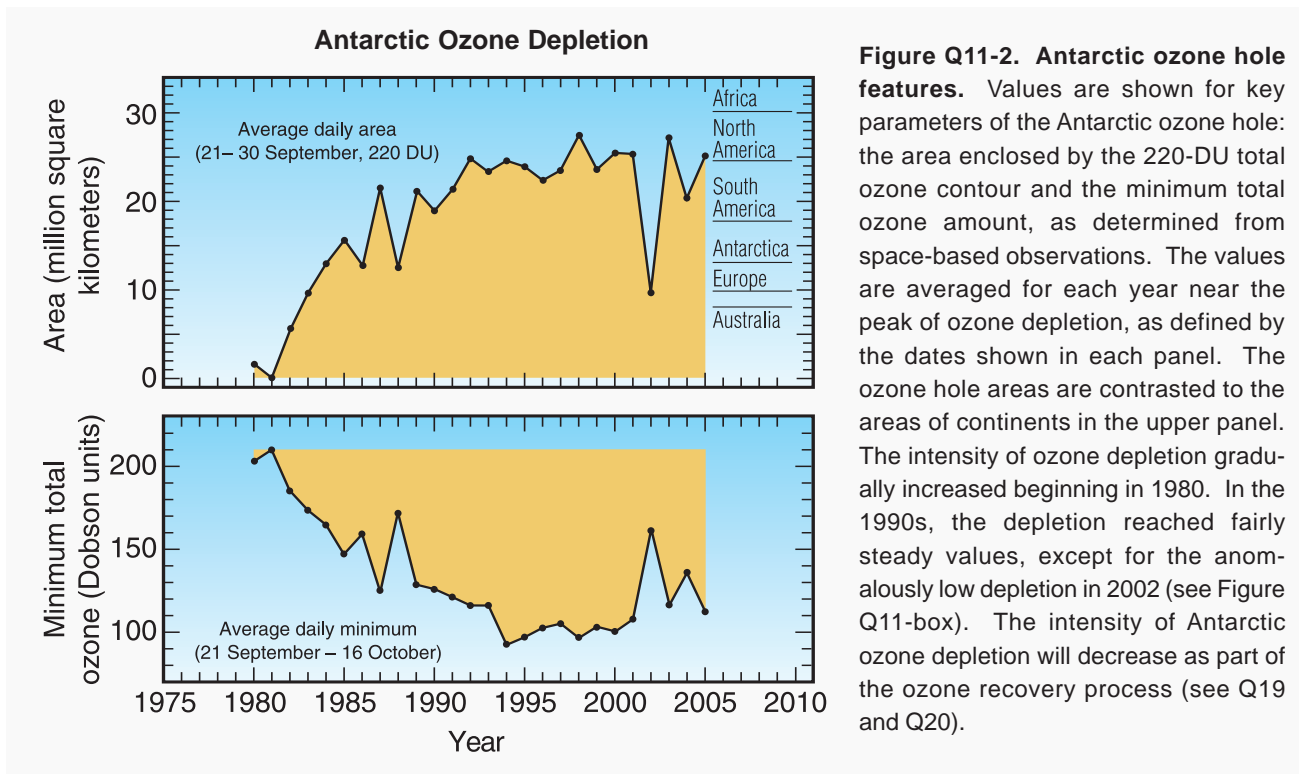
Antarctic Ozone Depletion

Figure Q11-2. Antarctic ozone hole features. Values are shown for key parameters of the Antarctic ozone hole: the area enclosed by the 220-DU total ozone contour and the minimum total ozone amount, as determined from space-based observations. The values are averaged for each year near the peak of ozone depletion, as defined by the dates shown in each panel. The ozone hole areas are contrasted to the areas of continents in the upper panel. The intensity of ozone depletion gradually increased beginning in 1980. In the 1990s, the depletion reached fairly steady values, except for the anomalously low depletion in 2002 (see Figure Q11-box). The intensity of Antarctic ozone depletion will decrease as part of the ozone recovery process (see Q19 and Q20).

measurements shown in Figure Q11-3 give an example of such depletion over South Pole, Antarctica, on 2 October 2001. The altitude region of total depletion (14-20 kilometers) in the profile corresponds to the region of lowest winter temperatures and highest chlorine monoxide (ClO) abundances. The average South Pole ozone profiles for the decades 1962-1971 and 1992-2001 (see Figure Q11-3) show how reactive halogen gases have dramatically altered the ozone layer. For the 1960s, the ozone layer is clearly evident in the October average profile and has a peak near 16 kilometers. For the 1990s, minimum average values in the center of the layer have fallen by 90% from the earlier values.

Long-term total ozone changes. Low winter temperatures and isolated conditions occur each year in the Antarctic stratosphere, but significant spring ozone depletion has been observed every year only since the early 1980s. In prior years, the amounts of reactive halogen gases in the stratosphere were insufficient to cause significant depletion. Satellite observations can be used to examine how ozone depletion has changed with time in both polar regions for the last three decades. Changes in ozone hole areas and minimum Antarctic ozone amounts are shown in Figure Q11-2. Depletion has increased since 1980 to become fairly stable in the 1990s and early 2000s, with the exception of 2002 (see Q11-box). Total ozone

averaged over the Antarctic region in late winter/early spring shows similar features (Figure Q12-1). Average values decreased steadily through the 1980s and 1990s, reaching minimum values that were 37% less than in pre-ozone-hole years (1970-1982). The year-to-year changes in the average values reflect variations in the meteorological conditions, which affect the extent of low polar temperatures and the transport of air into and out of the Antarctic winter stratosphere (see Figure Q11-box). However, essentially all of the ozone depletion in the Antarctic in most years is attributable to chemical loss from reactive halogen gases.

Restoring ozone in spring. The depletion of Antarctic ozone occurs primarily in the late winter/early spring season. In spring, temperatures in the lower polar stratosphere eventually warm, thereby ending PSC formation as well as the most effective chemical cycles that destroy ozone (see Q10). The transport of air between the polar stratosphere and lower latitudes also increases during this time, ending winter isolation. This allows ozone-rich air to be transported to polar regions, displacing air in which ozone has been severely depleted. This displaced air is mixed at lower latitudes with more abundant ozone-rich air. As a result, the ozone hole disappears by December and Antarctic ozone amounts remain near normal until the next winter season.
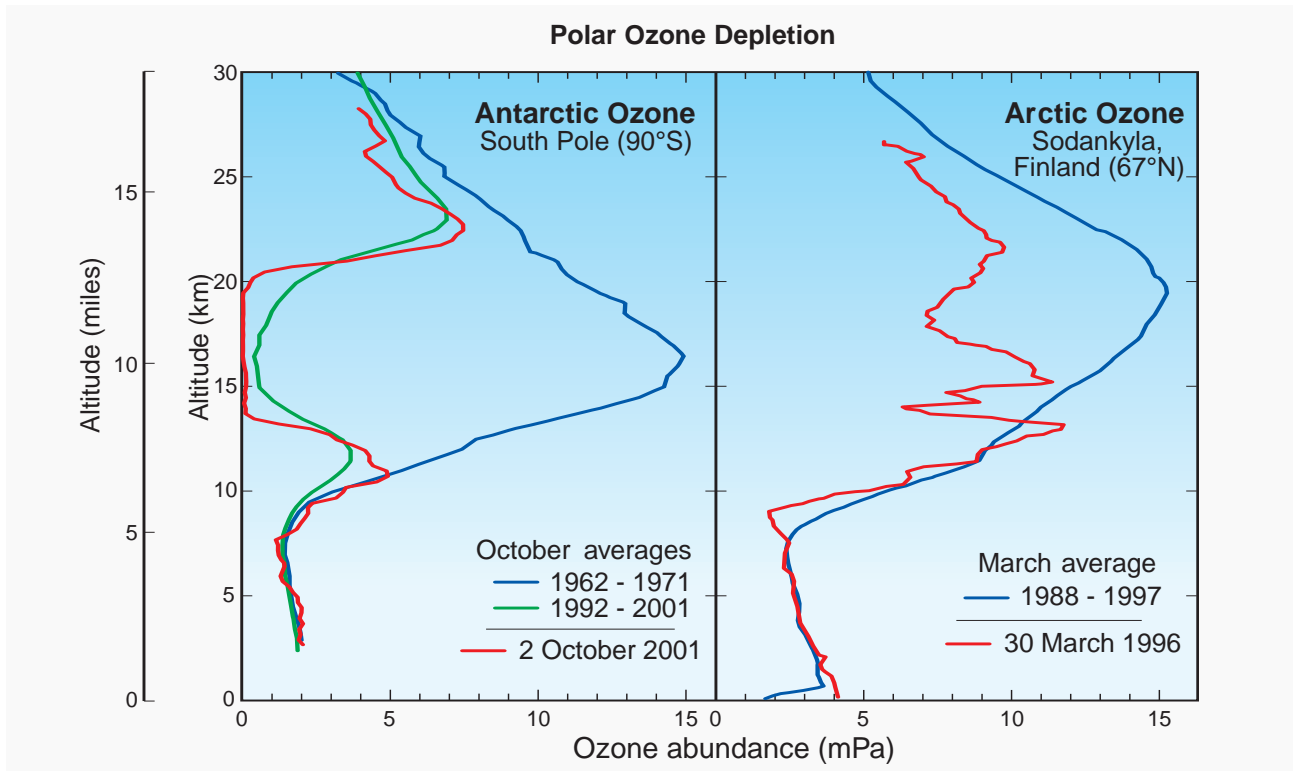
Polar Ozone Depletion

Figure Q11-3. Arctic and Antarctic ozone distribution. The stratospheric ozone layer resides between about 10 and 50 kilometers (6 to 31 miles) above Earth's surface over the globe. Long-term observations of the ozone layer with balloonborne instruments allow the winter Antarctic and Arctic regions to be compared. In the Antarctic at the South Pole, halogen gases have destroyed ozone in the ozone layer beginning in the 1980s. Before that period, the ozone layer was clearly present, as shown here using average ozone values from balloon observations made between 1962 and 1971. In more recent years, as shown here for 2 October 2001, ozone is destroyed completely between 14 and 20 kilometers (8 to 12 miles) in the Antarctic in spring. Average October values in the ozone layer now are reduced by 90% from pre-1980 values. The Arctic ozone layer is still present in spring as shown by the average March profile obtained over Finland between 1988 and 1997. However, March Arctic ozone values in some years are often below normal average values as shown here for 30 March 1996. In such years, winter minimum temperatures are generally below PSC formation temperatures for long periods. Ozone abundances are shown here with the unit "milli-Pascals" (mPa), which is a measure of absolute pressure (100 million mPa = atmospheric sea-level pressure).

The Anomalous 2002 Antarctic Ozone Hole

The 2002 Antarctic ozone hole showed features that surprised scientists. They considered it anomalous at the time because the hole had much less area as viewed from space and much less ozone depletion as measured by minimum column ozone amounts when compared with values in several preceding years (see Figure Q11-box). The 2002 ozone hole area and minimum ozone values stand out clearly in displays of the year-to-year changes in these quantities (see Figure Q11-2). The smaller area was unexpected because the conditions required to deplete ozone, namely low temperatures and available reactive halogen gases, are not expected to have large year-to-year variations. Ozone was being depleted in August and early September 2002, but the hole *broke apart* into two separate depleted regions during the last week of September. The depletion in these two regions was significantly less than was observed inside either the 2001 or 2003 ozone holes, but still substantially greater than was observed in the early 1980s.

The anomalous behavior in 2002 occurred because of specific atmospheric air motions that sometimes occur in polar regions, not large decreases in reactive chlorine and bromine amounts in the Antarctic stratosphere. The Antarctic stratosphere was warmed by very strong, large-scale weather systems in 2002 that originated in the lower atmosphere (troposphere) at midlatitudes in late September. In late September, Antarctic temperatures are generally very low (see Q10) and ozone destruction rates are near their peak values. These tropospheric systems traveled poleward and upward into the stratosphere, upsetting the circumpolar wind flow and warming the lower stratosphere where ozone depletion was ongoing. The higher-than-normal impact of these weather disturbances during the critical time period for ozone loss reduced the total loss of ozone in 2002.

The warming in 2002 was unprecedented in Antarctic meteorological observations. Warming events are difficult to predict because of their complex formation conditions.

Large Antarctic ozone depletion returned in 2003 through 2005, in a manner similar to that observed from the mid-1990s to 2001 (see Figures Q11-box and Q11-2). The high ozone depletion found since the mid-1990s, with the exception of 2002, is expected to be typical of coming years. A significant, sustained reduction of Antarctic ozone depletion, defined as ozone recovery, requires the removal of halogen source gases from the stratosphere (see Q19 and Q20).
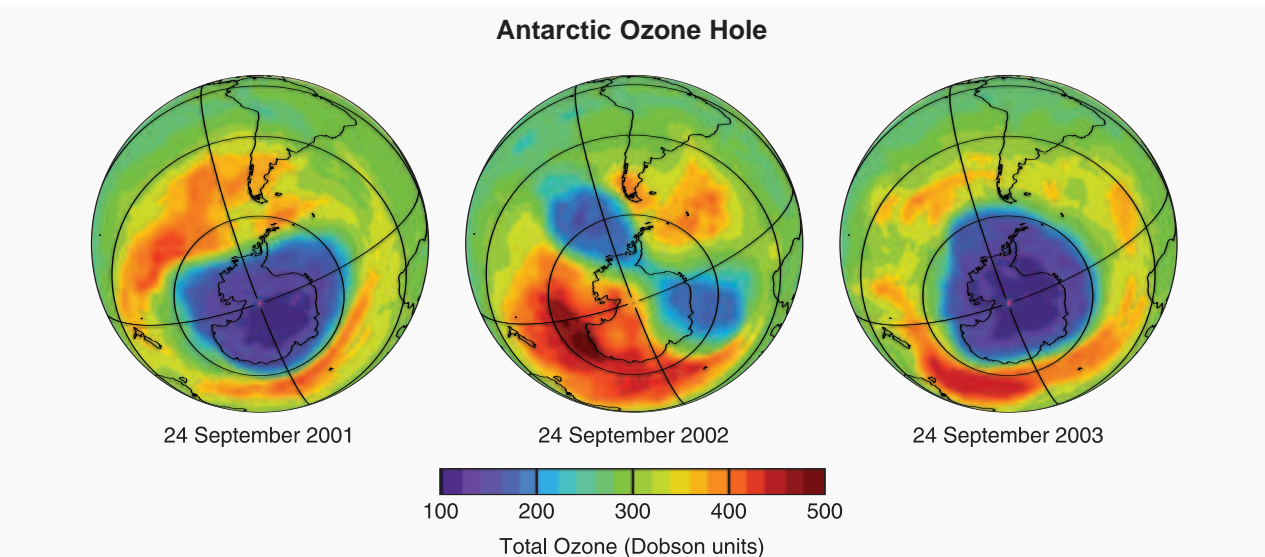
Antarctic Ozone Hole

| 24 September 2001 | 24 September 2002 | 24 September 2003 |

100   200   300   400   500
Total Ozone (Dobson units)

Figure Q11-Box. Anomalous 2002 ozone hole. Views from space of the Antarctic ozone hole as observed on 24 September in each of three consecutive years. The hole split and elongated in 2002, reducing the total depletion of ozone observed that year in comparison with 2001 and 2003. The anomalous depletion in 2002 is attributable to an early warming of the polar stratosphere caused by air disturbances originating in midlatitudes, rather than to large changes in the amounts of reactive chlorine and bromine in the Antarctic stratosphere.

Q12: Is there depletion of the Arctic ozone layer?

Yes, significant depletion of the Arctic ozone layer now occurs in some years in the late winter/early spring period (January-April). However, the maximum depletion is less severe than that observed in the Antarctic and is more variable from year to year. A large and recurrent "ozone hole," as found in the Antarctic stratosphere, does not occur in the Arctic.

Significant ozone depletion in the Arctic stratosphere occurs in cold winters because of reactive halogen gases. The depletion, however, is much less than the depletion that now occurs in every Antarctic winter and spring. Although Arctic depletion does not generally create persistent "ozone hole"-like features in Arctic total ozone maps, depletion is observed in altitude profiles of ozone and in long-term average values of polar ozone.

Altitude profiles of Arctic ozone. Arctic ozone is measured using a variety of instruments (see Q5), as for the Antarctic (see Q11). These measurements show changes within the ozone layer, the vertical region that contains the highest ozone abundances in the stratosphere. Figure Q11-2 shows an example of balloonborne measurements of a depleted ozone profile in the Arctic region on 30 March 1996, and contrasts the depletion with that found in the Antarctic. The 30 March spring profile shows much less depletion than the 2 October spring profile in the Antarctic. In general, some reduction in the Arctic ozone layer occurs each late winter/early spring season. However, complete depletion each year over a broad vertical layer, as is now common in the Antarctic stratosphere, is not found in the Arctic.

Long-term total ozone changes. Satellite and ground-based observations can be used to examine the average total ozone abundances in the Arctic region for the last three decades and to contrast them with Antarctic abundances (see Figure Q12-1). Decreases from the pre-ozone-hole average values (1970-1982) were observed in the Arctic beginning in the 1980s, when similar changes were occurring in the Antarctic. The decreases have reached a maximum of about 30% but have remained smaller than those found in the Antarctic since the mid-1980s. The year-to-year changes in the Arctic and Antarctic average ozone values reflect annual variations in meteorological conditions that affect the extent of low polar temperatures and the transport of air into and out of the polar stratosphere. The effect of these variations is generally greater for the Arctic than the Antarctic.

Figure Q12-1. Average polar ozone. Total ozone in polar regions is measured by well-calibrated satellite instruments. Shown here is a comparison of average springtime total ozone values found between 1970 and 1982 (solid and dashed red lines) with those in later years. Each point represents a monthly average in October in the Antarctic or in March in the Arctic. After 1982, significant ozone depletion is found in most years in the Arctic and all years in the Antarctic. The largest average depletions have occurred in the Antarctic since 1990. The ozone changes are the combination of chemical destruction and natural variations. Variations in meteorological conditions influence the year-to-year changes in depletion,

Average Total Ozone in Polar Regions

particularly in the Arctic. Essentially all of the decrease in the Antarctic and usually most of the decrease in the Arctic each year are attributable to chemical destruction by reactive halogen gases. Average total ozone values over the Arctic are naturally larger at the beginning of each winter season because more ozone is transported poleward each season in the Northern Hemisphere than in the Southern Hemisphere.
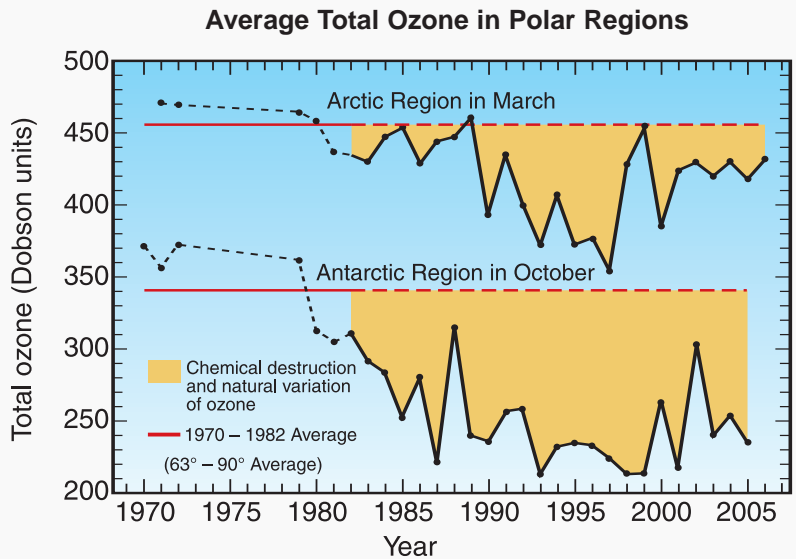
Arctic vs. Antarctic. The Arctic winter stratosphere is generally warmer than its Antarctic counterpart (see Figure Q10-1). Higher temperatures reduce polar stratospheric cloud (PSC) formation, which slows the conversion of reactive chlorine gases to form ClO and, as a consequence, reduces the amount of ozone depletion (see Q10). Furthermore, the temperature and wind conditions are much more variable in the Arctic from winter to winter and within a winter season than in the Antarctic. Large year-to-year differences occur in Arctic minimum temperatures and the duration of PSC-forming temperatures into early spring. In a few Arctic winters, minimum temperatures are not low enough for PSCs to form. These factors combine to cause ozone depletion to be variable in the Arctic from year to year, with some years having little to no ozone depletion.

As in the Antarctic, depletion of ozone in the Arctic is confined to the late winter/early spring season. In spring, temperatures in the lower stratosphere eventually warm, thereby ending PSC formation as well as the most effective chemical cycles that destroy ozone. The subsequent transport of ozone-rich air into the Arctic stratosphere displaces ozone-depleted air. As a result, ozone layer abundances are restored to near-normal values until the following winter.

High Arctic total ozone. A significant difference exists between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres in how ozone-rich stratospheric air is transported into the polar regions from lower latitudes during fall and winter. In the northern stratosphere, the poleward and downward transport of ozone-rich air is stronger. As a result, total ozone values in the Arctic are considerably higher than in the Antarctic at the beginning of each winter season (see Figure Q12-1).