

**THE AUSTRALIAN BASELINE SEA LEVEL
MONITORING PROJECT**

MONTHLY DATA REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2008



Australian Government

Bureau of Meteorology

This report was prepared under the Australian Greenhouse Science Program for the Australian Greenhouse Office, supported by the National Tidal Centre, Bureau of Meteorology.



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Quality Certification:

I authorise the issue of this Australian Baseline Sea Level Monitoring Project Monthly Data Report for September 2008 in accordance with National Tidal Centre Quality Assurance procedures.

William Mitchell
Manager - National Tidal Centre

The Australian Baseline Sea Level Monitoring Project

Monthly Data Report

SEPTEMBER 2008

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Australian Baseline Sea Level Monitoring Project (ABSLMP) is to monitor changes in sea level around Australia. It involves the operation and maintenance of an array of high-resolution sea level gauges and associated meteorological instruments (see Figure B) and management of a quality controlled national database of observations that is made available to the scientific and wider communities.

The Baseline array and a similar array in the South Pacific have been widely acknowledged in the global science community as two of the most accurate and reliable sources for information on sea level and climate change anywhere in the world.

This report is one of a series of monthly data reports that provide tables and figures summarising the data collected to date. The accompanying text relates primarily to the quality of the data rather than its interpretation. Periodic scientific evaluation of the data in the context of climate variability and climate change is provided in an annual data report.

The trends are derived from the sea level record. However, readers are cautioned against drawing any conclusions from short duration records, particularly when used in isolation from other phenomena. The sea level record includes natural variability, such as El Niño events and the effects of atmospheric, oceanographic and geological processes. It is important to note that as the sea level record becomes longer, the short-term trend estimate becomes more stable and reliable. Vertical movement of the instrumentation relative to local topography is monitored and the results are listed on the Geoscience Australia web site. Movement of each station relative to the International Terrestrial Reference Frame is not monitored.

NOTES ON THE DATA FOR SEPTEMBER 2008

Sea level data return (Figures 1 and 17) in September 2008 was good for most stations. Due to occupational health and safety reasons the station at Broome is being switched off when ships are being loaded. This has resulted in a loss of two days of un-recoverable data. Back-up battery failure at Spring Bay resulted in instrument failure and subsequently no data was recorded from the 26th of September to the end of the month.

The residuals (Figures 2 and 3), the difference between the observations and the tidal predictions, are the non-tidal components of the sea level observations. The residuals are primarily the consequence of short-term meteorological effects (Figures 5 and 9) and can also indicate the passage of a tsunami. The meteorological convention is followed in Figure 5 where the vector indicates the direction from which the wind is coming.

Figure 10 compares the mean, maximum and minimum values for air temperature, water temperature and barometric pressure for September 2008 with the long-term values. Note that the long-term ranges are calculated using the previous sets of September data for each station *excluding* the current month of data.

The mean air temperatures in September 2008 were very close to, or slightly higher than the long-term September mean. A maximum record air temperature of 30.8°C was set at Port Kembla this month. Port Stanvac was the exception with a September mean much cooler than the long-term average and a record low temperature of 2.2°C being set. The mean water temperatures were close to the long-term September mean for all locations with Broome setting a record high water temperature of 27.5°C. The mean barometric pressures for September 2008 were all close to the long-term means except for Port Kembla where the mean barometric pressure was substantially greater than the long-term average and a new record maximum pressure of 1015.0 hPa was recorded.

Figure 11 shows the monthly mean sea levels with respect to an arbitrary fixed offset from the zero of the tide gauge. The monthly mean sea levels contain seasonal variations, in contrast to the sea level anomalies (Figure 12), which have the seasonal signals removed from the data.

The sea level anomalies (Figure 12) in September 2008 were generally slightly positive in the north, west and south from Groote Eylandt to Portland and Burnie and tending neutral or slightly negative along the Eastern seaboard, Lorne and Stony Point.

Figure 13 shows the history of the short-term sea level trend for each site during the life of the Australian Baseline Sea Level Monitoring Project. Table 1 lists the commencement of operation, the latest sea level trend and the change in trend with respect to the previous month's analysis. It is important to stress that as the sea level record becomes longer, the short-term trend estimate becomes more stable and reliable. Observed trends in sea level include natural variability, for example, events such as El Niño and effects due to many other atmospheric, oceanographic and geological processes. Longer-term data sets for all stations are required in order to separate the effects of the different signals. ***Please exercise caution in interpreting the short-term trends in the table below*** – they will almost certainly change over the coming years as the data set increases in length.

The barometric pressure anomalies (Figure 14) in September 2008 reflect the general neutrality of barometric pressures presented in Figure 10. The positive displacement of the Port Kembla minimum, mean and maximum barometric pressure values shown in figure 10 is reflected in the sustained positivity in the anomalies. It is difficult to relate the water and air temperature anomalies (Figures 15 and 16) directly to those of barometric pressure and sea level without considering other effects, such as localised currents, wind speeds and directions. The anomalies are primarily used to quality check the water and air temperature data.

The number of hits to the Australian Baseline Sea Level Monitoring project web pages from 2005 to September 2008 are given in Figure A.

Please note: Tide gauges at Stony Point and Lorne do not record air temperature, water temperature and barometric pressure data and are not present in Figures 3,7,8,9,11,12,13 and 16. The tide gauge at Lorne does not record wind data and is not present in Figures 4, 5 and 6.

Table 1: Tide gauge position, data start date, short-term sea level trends and change in trend from the previous month for the Australian Baseline array through September 2008.

Location	Lat / Long	Installation Date	Trend (mm/yr)	Change from previous month
Cocos Islands	12°07'0.1"S / 96°53'30.9"E	Sep 1992	+8.4	+0.1
Groote Eylandt	13°51'36.2"S / 136°24'56.1"E	Sep 1993	+6.3	+0.1
Darwin	12°28'18.4"S / 130°50'45.1"E	May 1990	+7.2	+0.1
Broome	18°00'03.0"S / 122°13'07.1"E	Nov 1991	+8.6	0.0
Hillarys	31°49'32.0"S / 115°44'18.9"E	Nov 1991	+8.6	+0.1
Esperance	33°52'15.2"S / 121°53'43.3"E	Mar 1992	+5.5	+0.1
Thevenard	32°08'56.2"S / 133°38'28.8"E	Mar 1992	+3.8	+0.1
Port Stanvac	35°06'31.0"S / 138°28'1.3"E	Jun 1992	+4.9	+0.1
Portland	38°20'36.4"S / 141°36'47.4"E	Jul 1991	+2.6	0.0
Lorne	38°32'49.4"S / 143°59'19.8"E	Jan 1993	+1.5	0.0
Stony Point	38°22'19.7"S / 145°13'28.9"E	Jan 1993	+1.7	0.0
Burnie	41°03'0.3"S / 145°54'54.0"E	Sep 1992	+2.2	+0.2
Spring Bay	42°32'45.1"S / 147°55'57.8"E	May 1991	+3.2	0.0
Port Kembla	34°28'25.5"S / 150°54'42.7"E	Jul 1991	+3.2	-0.1
Roslyn Bay	23°09'39.7"S / 150°47'24.6"E	Jun 1992	+1.6	0.0
Cape Ferguson	19°16'38.4"S / 147°03'30.4"E	Sep 1991	+2.7	-0.1

Figure A: Number of hits on the Australian Baseline Sea Level Monitoring Project web pages from 2004 to September 2008.

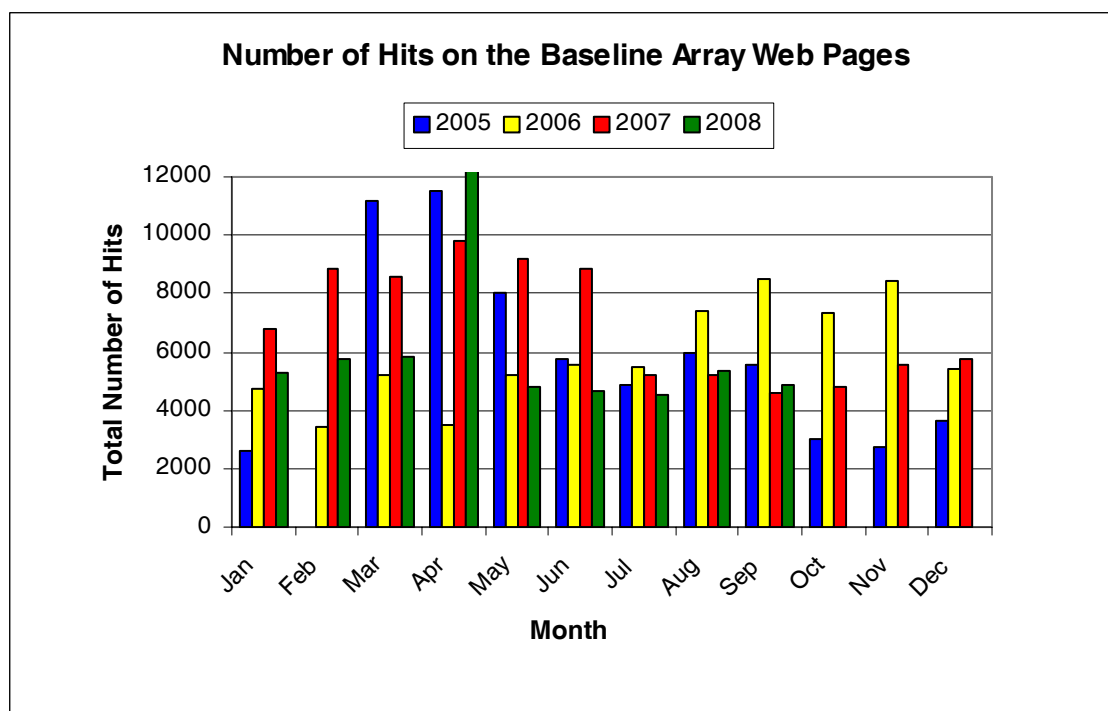
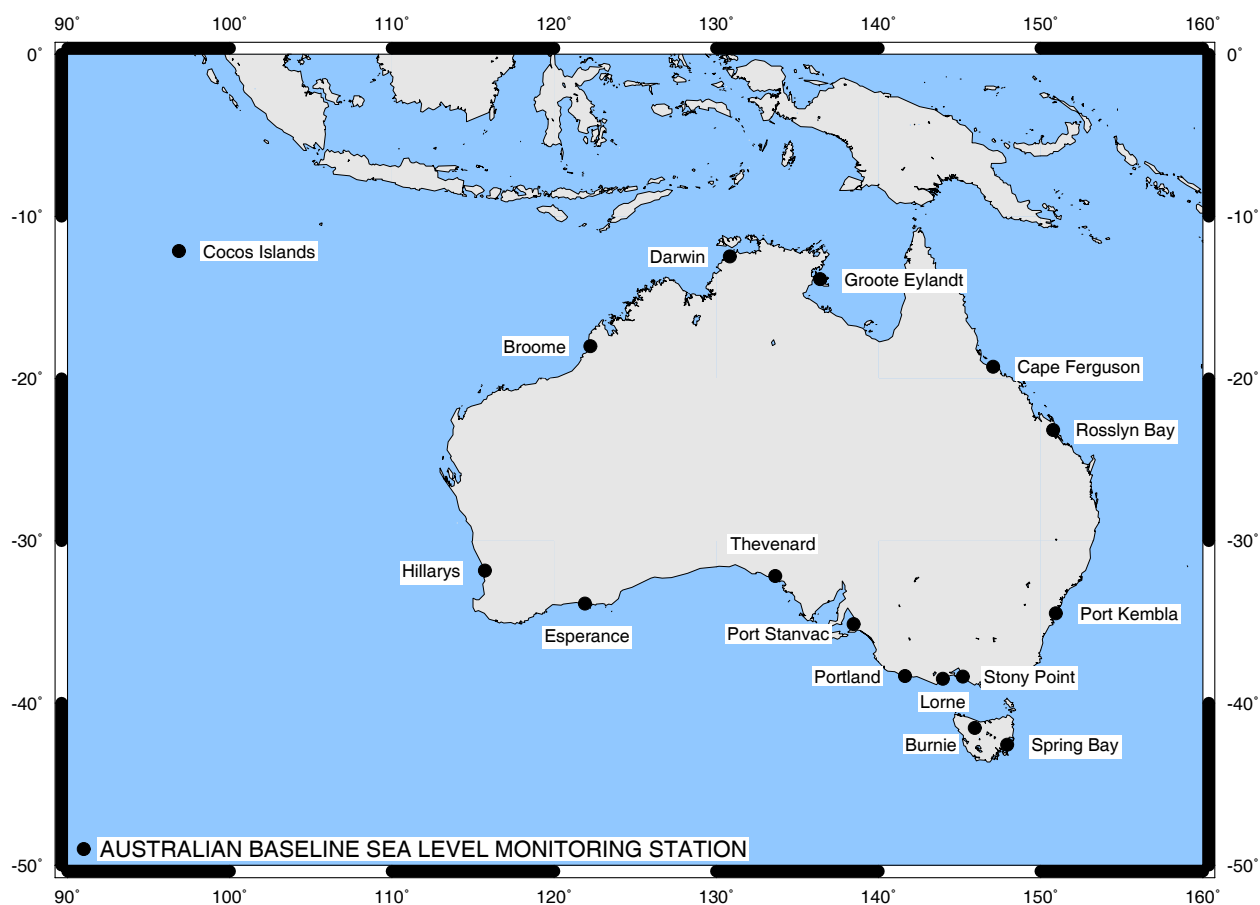


Figure B: Australian Baseline Sea Level Monitoring Project sites.



The *Monthly Data Report* is prepared by the NTC, Bureau of Meteorology for the Australian Greenhouse Office. Staff members produce the text, plots and tables.

Further information on the *Monthly Data Report* and other projects conducted by the NTC, Bureau of Meteorology can be obtained from the following address.

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Please note the following:

While all care has been taken in the collection, analysis and compilation of the data, it is supplied on the condition that neither the *Commonwealth of Australia* nor the NTC, Bureau of Meteorology shall be liable for any loss or injury whatsoever arising from the use of the data. The Commonwealth of Australia holds copyright for material contained in this document.

Individuals and organisations are advised that quality controlled six-minute or hourly data from these stations are available on request from the NTC, Bureau of Meteorology. Some handling fees may be charged. For commercial agencies requesting data, some additional costs may be levied.

Figure 1

SEPTEMBER 2008
SIX MINUTE SEA LEVEL OBSERVATIONS (m)

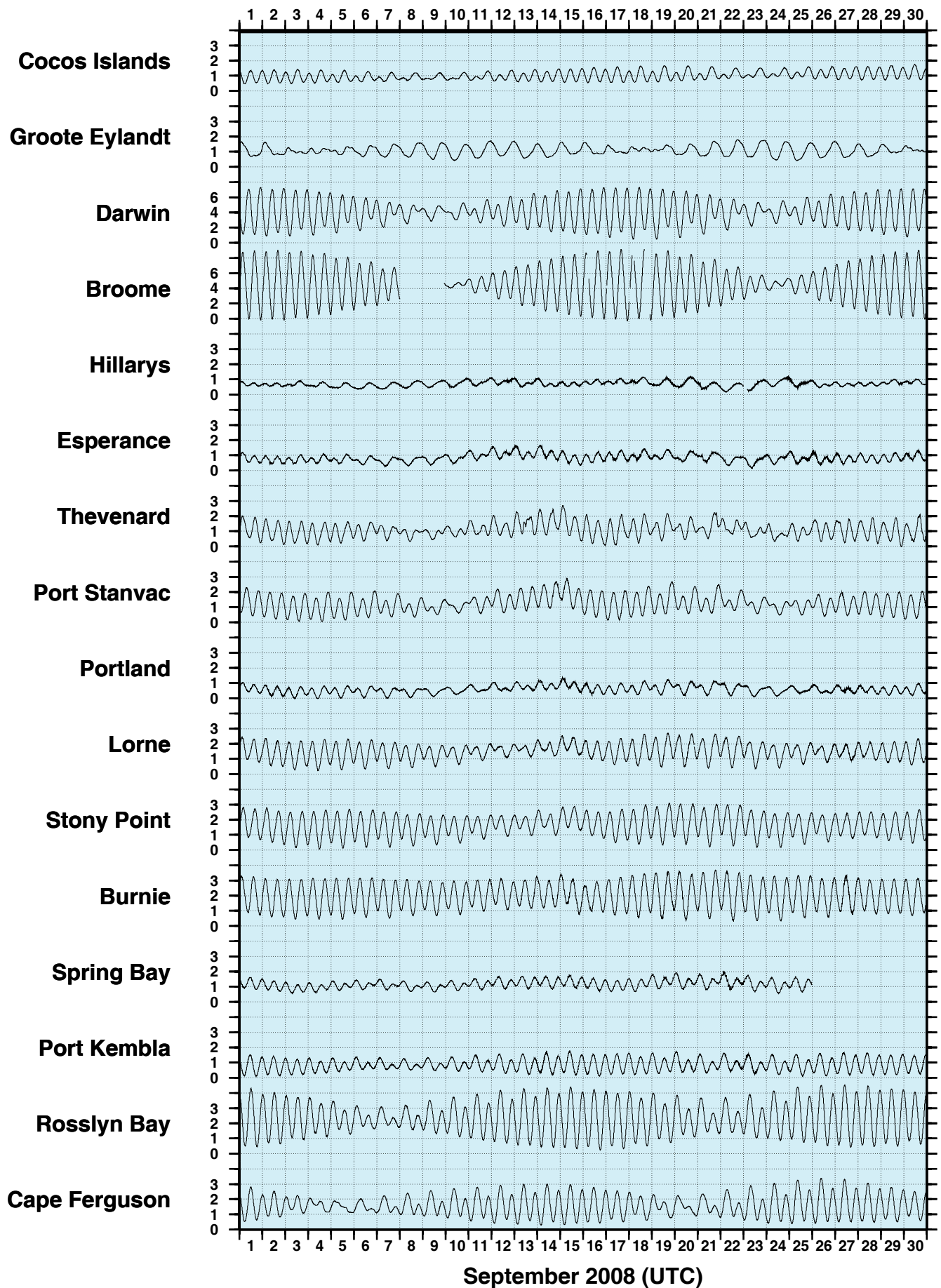


Figure 2

SEPTEMBER 2008
SIX MINUTE RESIDUAL WATER LEVELS (m)

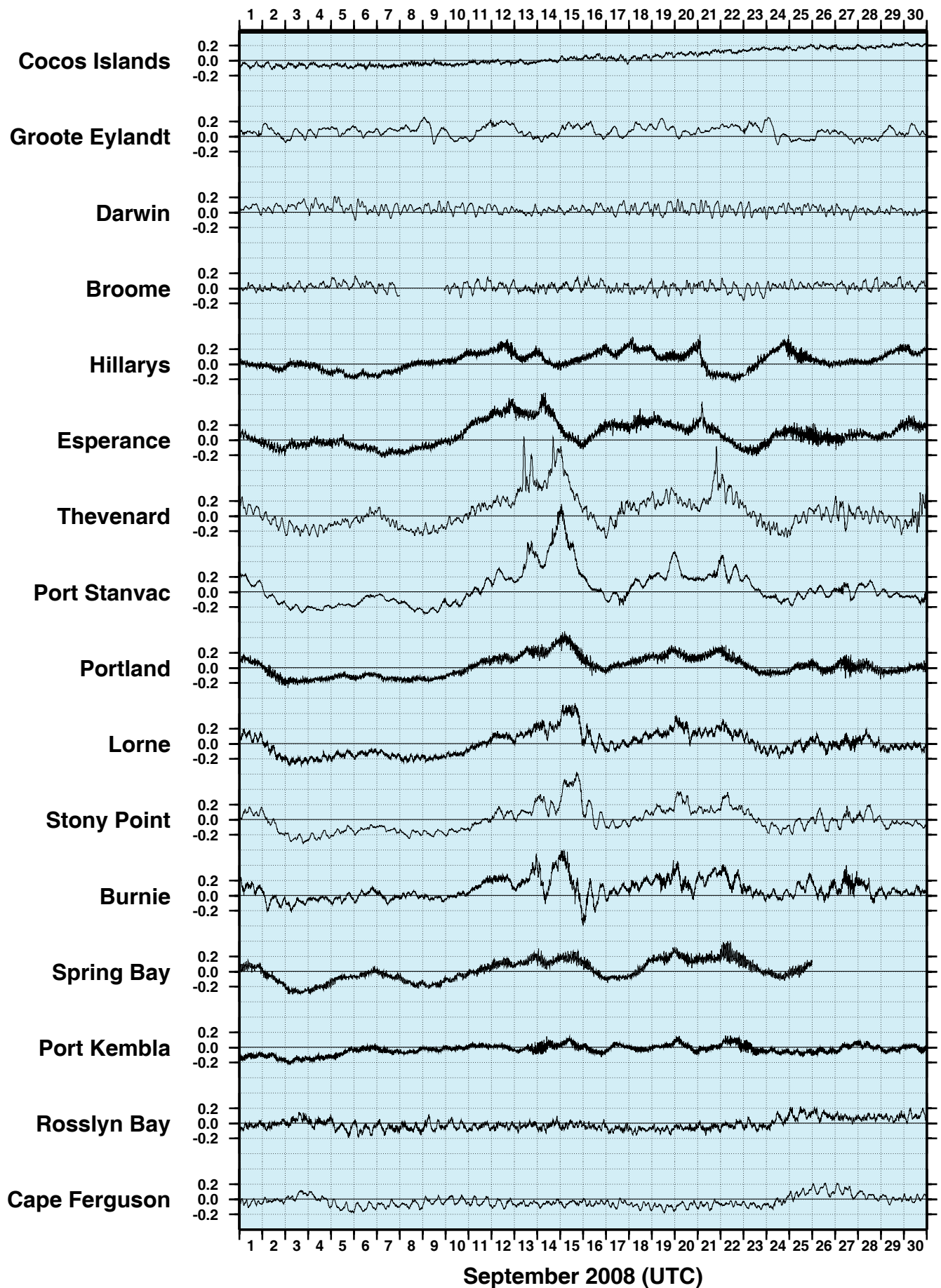


Figure 3
SEPTEMBER 2008
SIX MINUTE RESIDUALS
ADJUSTED FOR ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE (m)

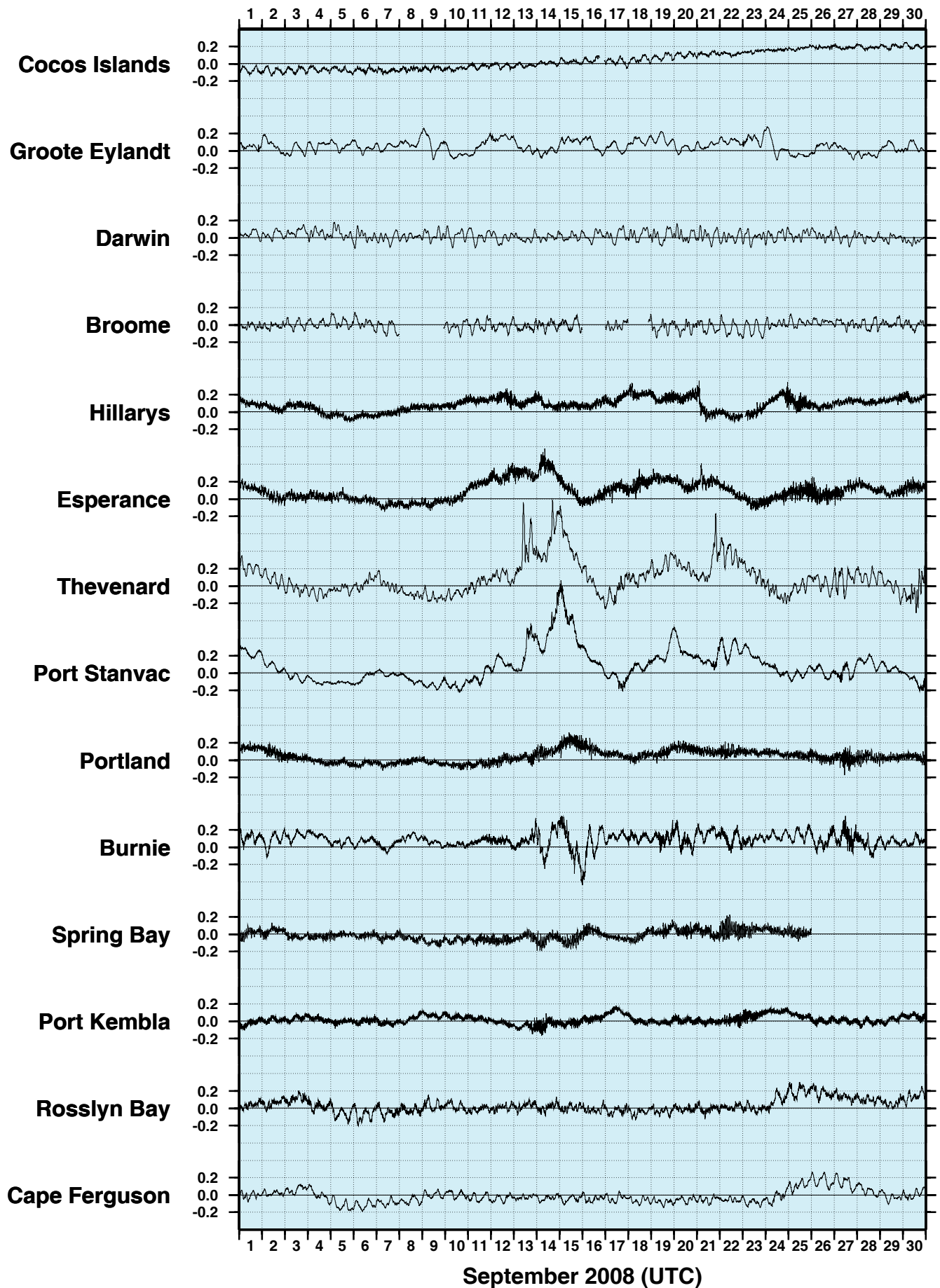


Figure 4

SEPTEMBER 2008
HOURLY WIND SPEEDS (m/s)

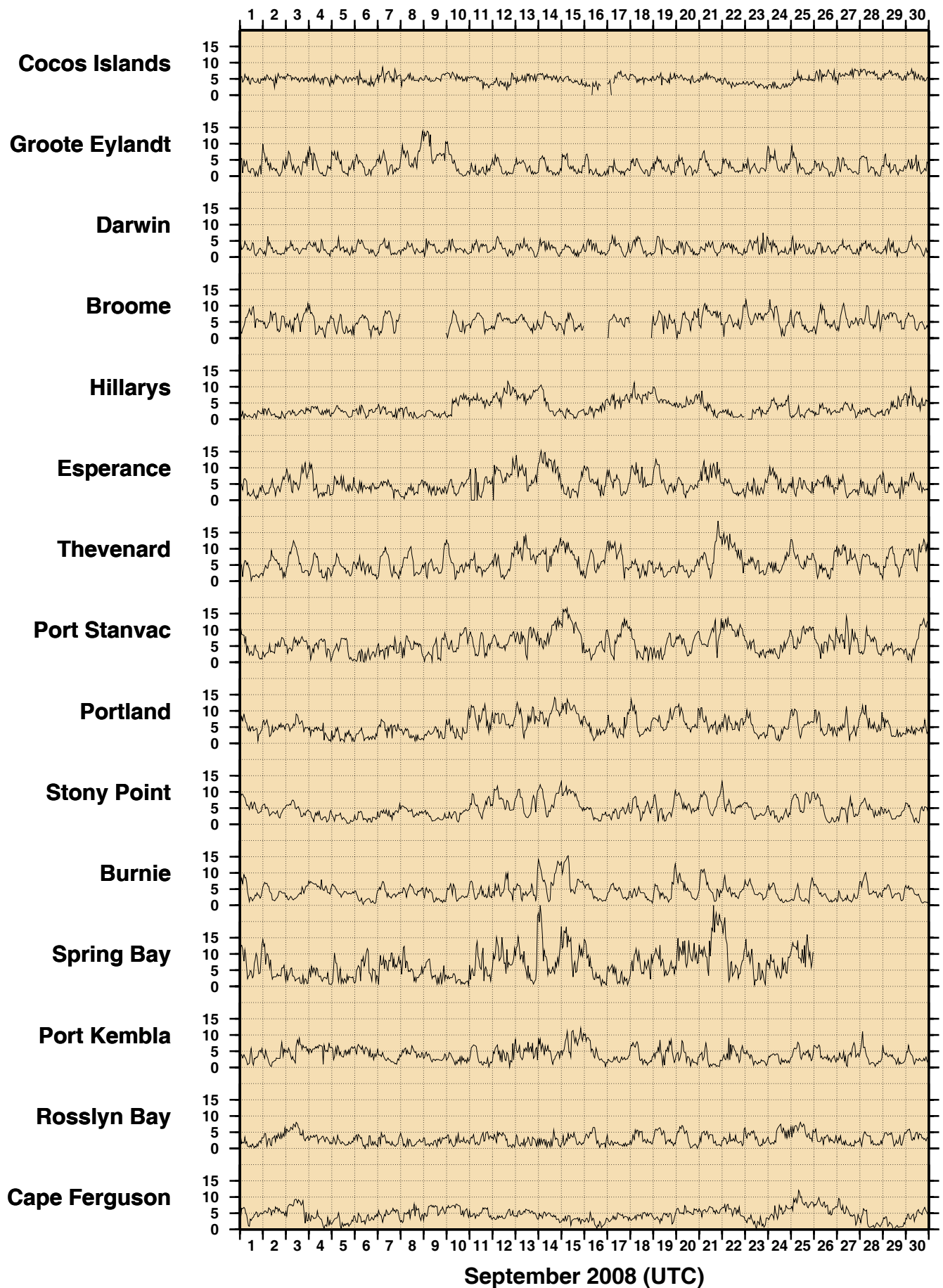


Figure 5

SEPTEMBER 2008
HOURLY INCIDENT WINDS (m/s, deg True)

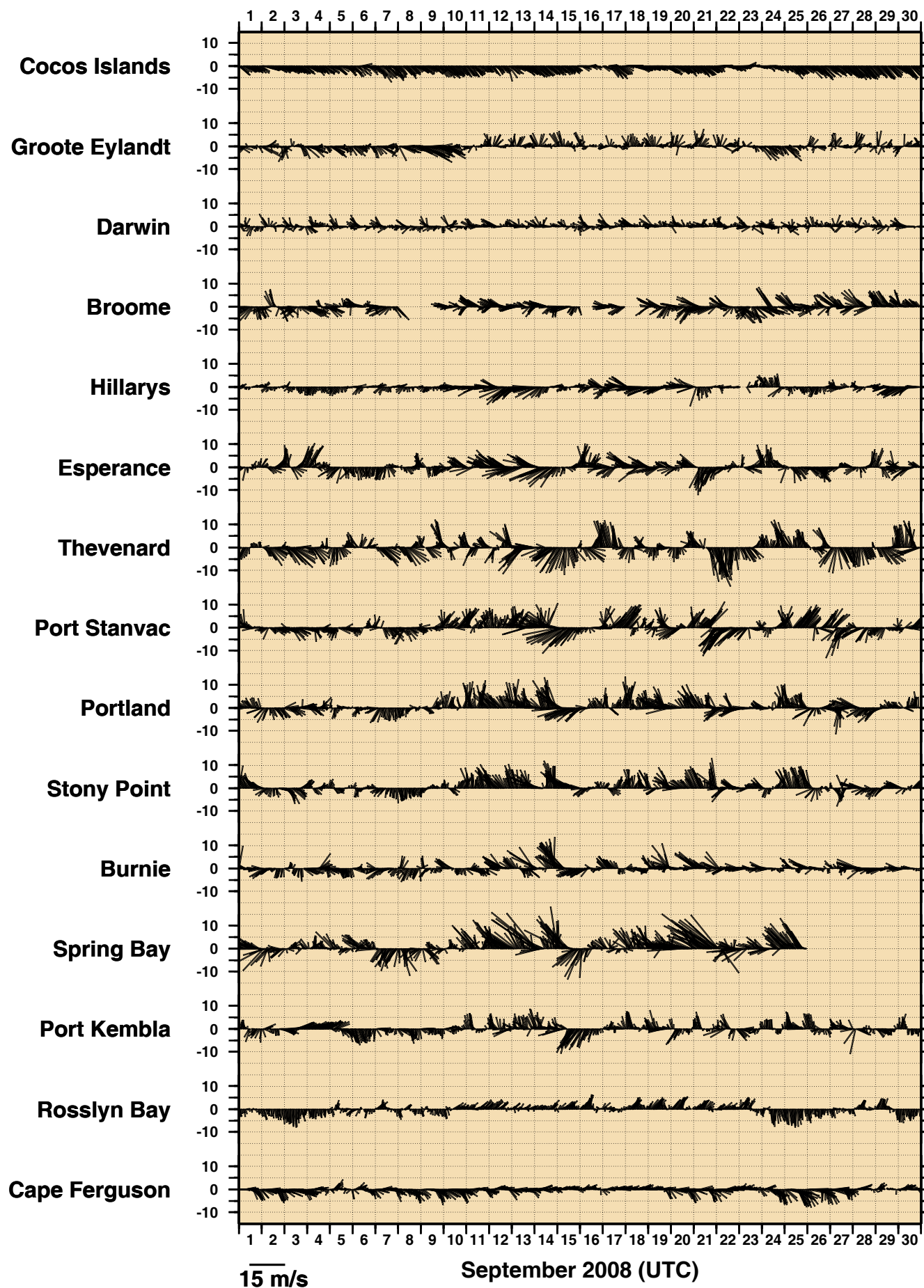


Figure 6

SEPTEMBER 2008
HOURLY MAXIMUM WIND GUSTS (m/s)

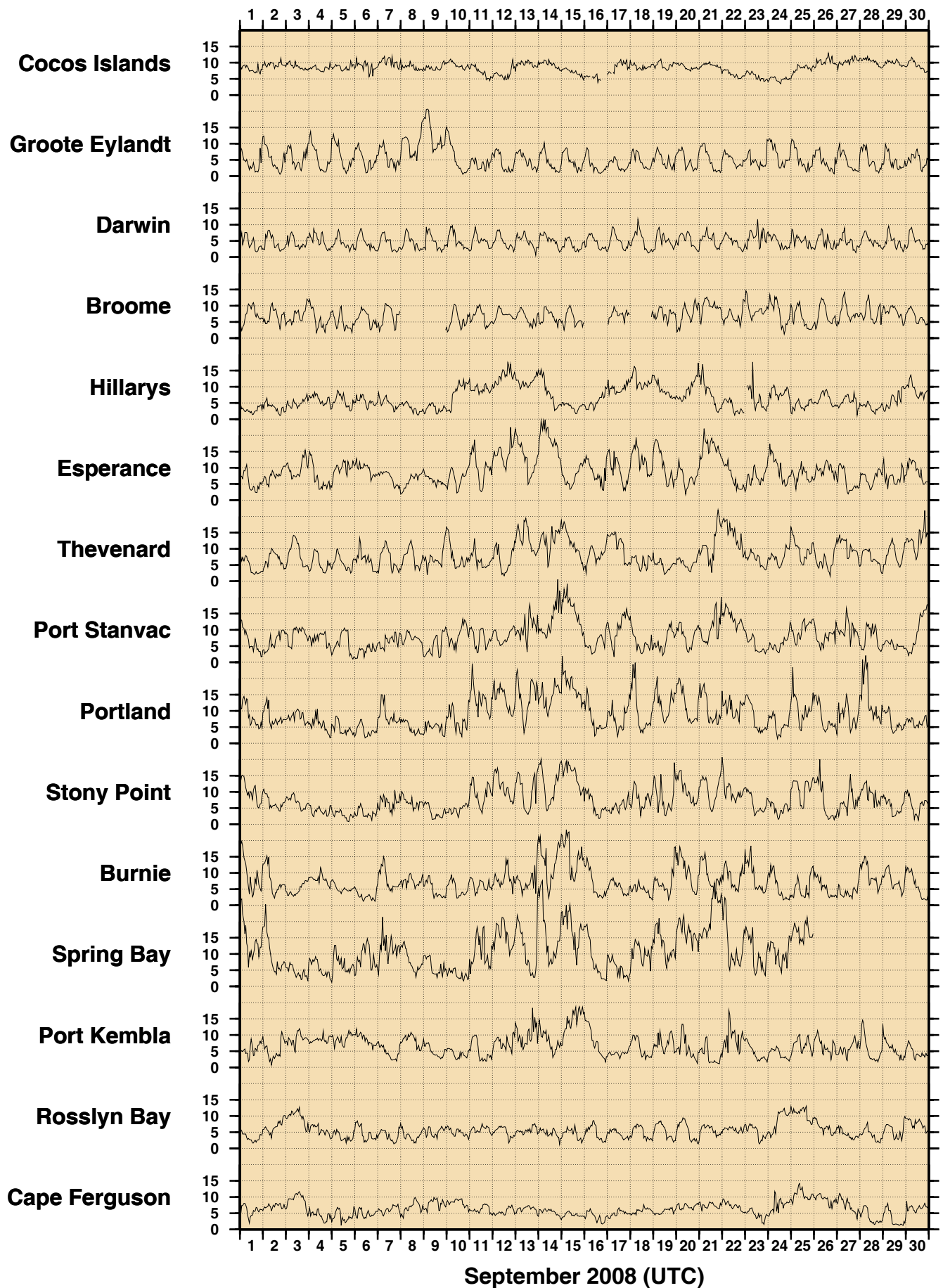


Figure 7

SEPTEMBER 2008
HOURLY AIR TEMPERATURES (°C)

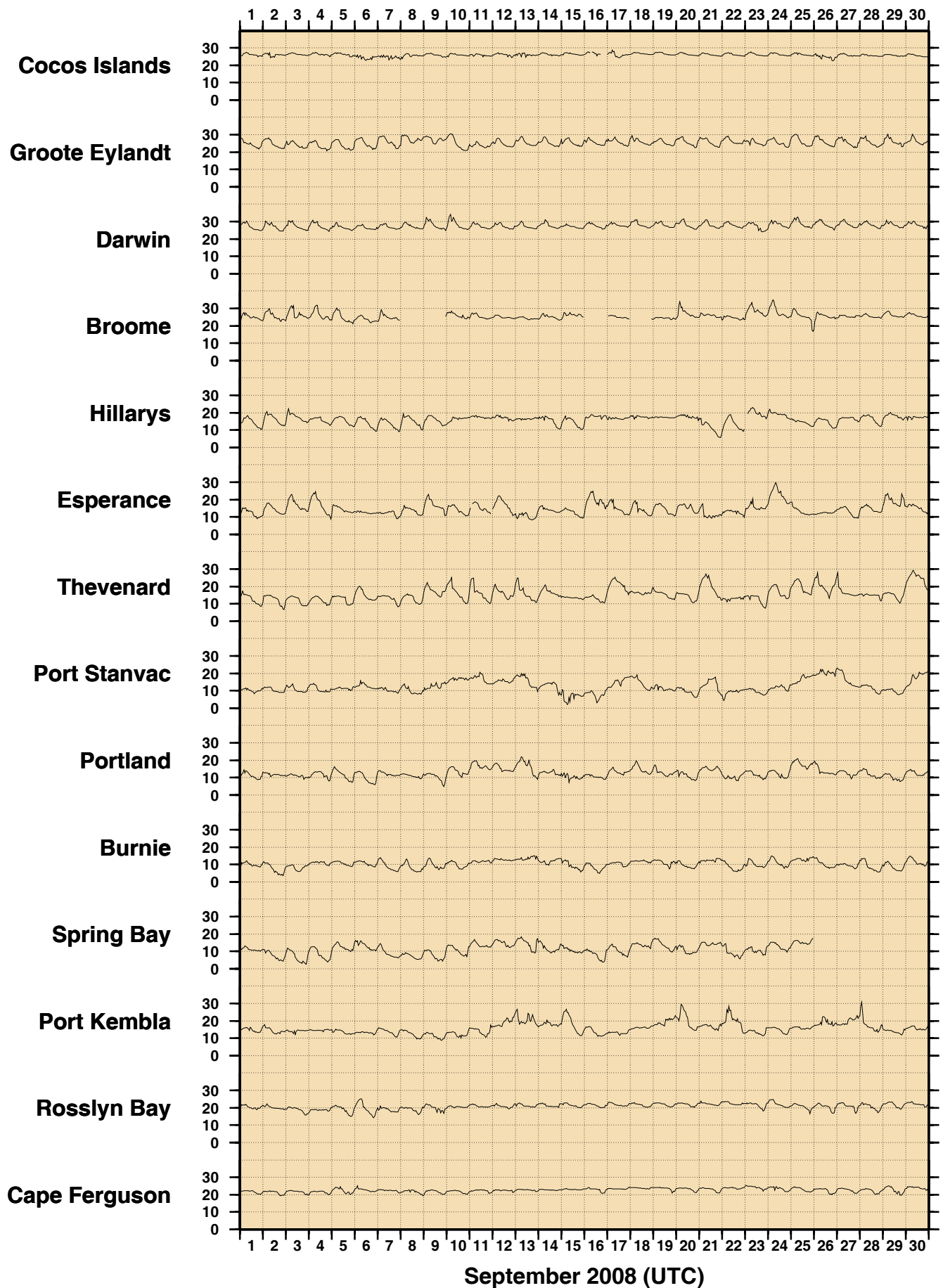


Figure 8

SEPTEMBER 2008
HOURLY WATER TEMPERATURES (°C)

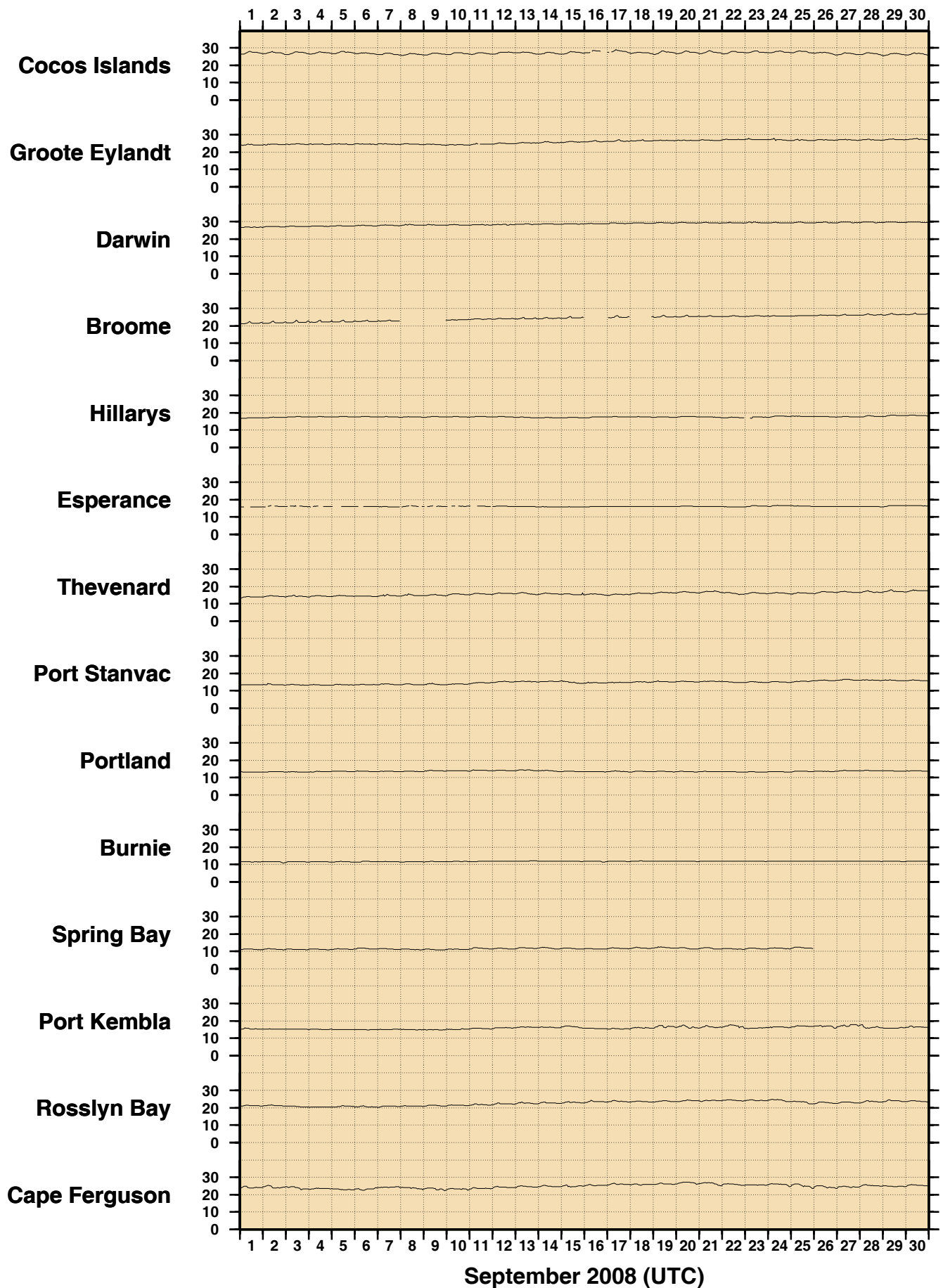


Figure 9

SEPTEMBER 2008
HOURLY ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE (hPa)

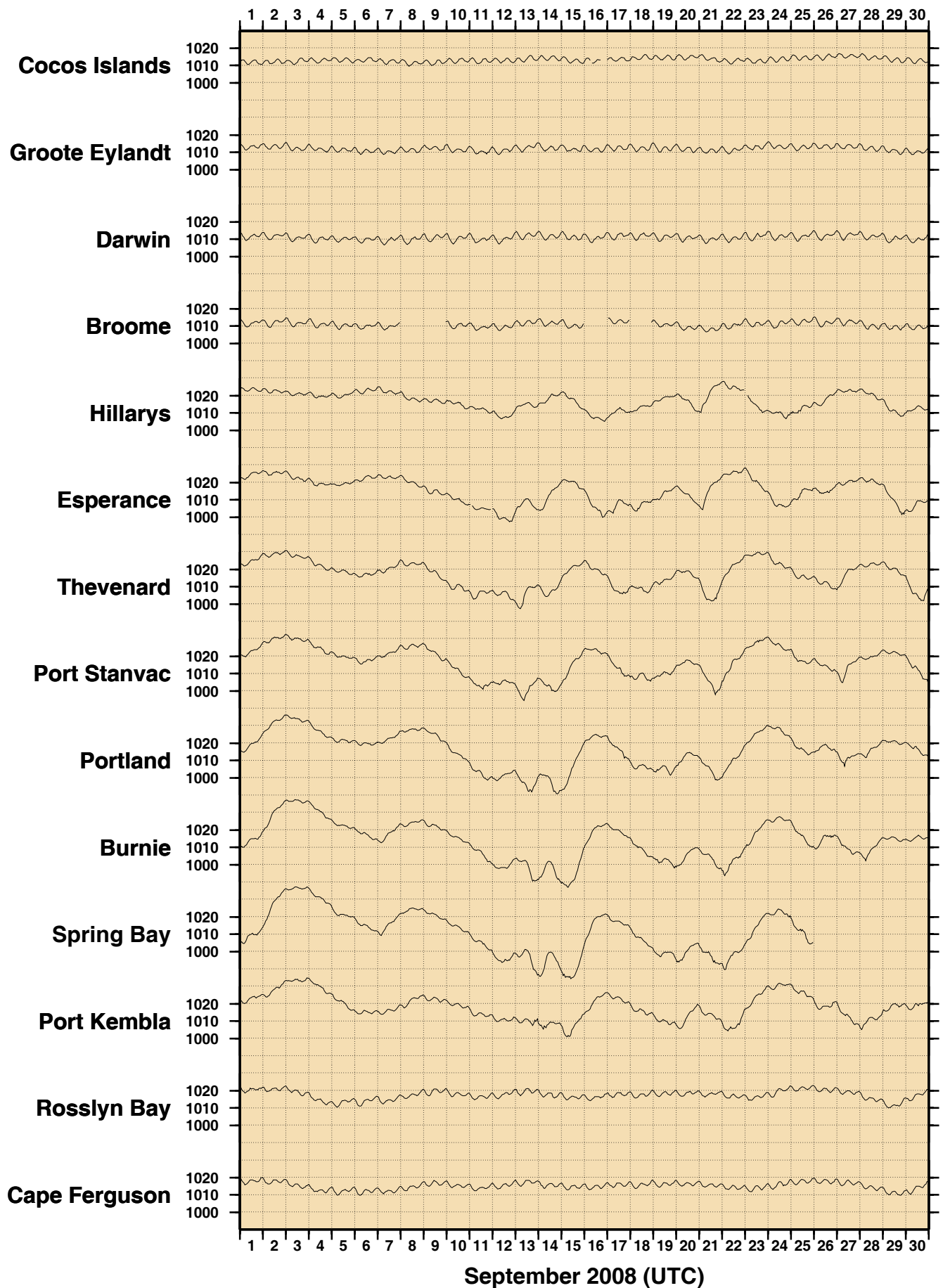
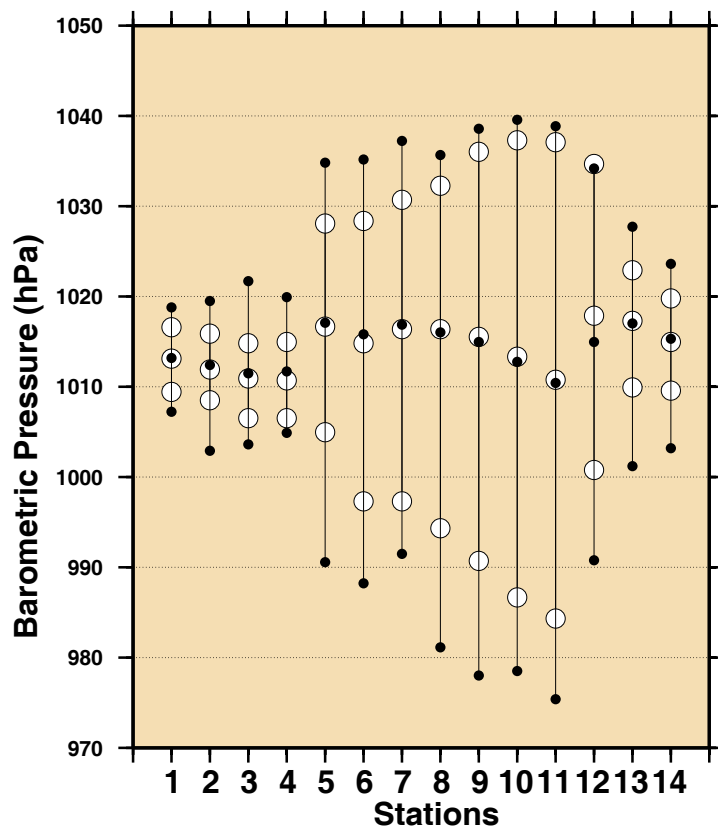
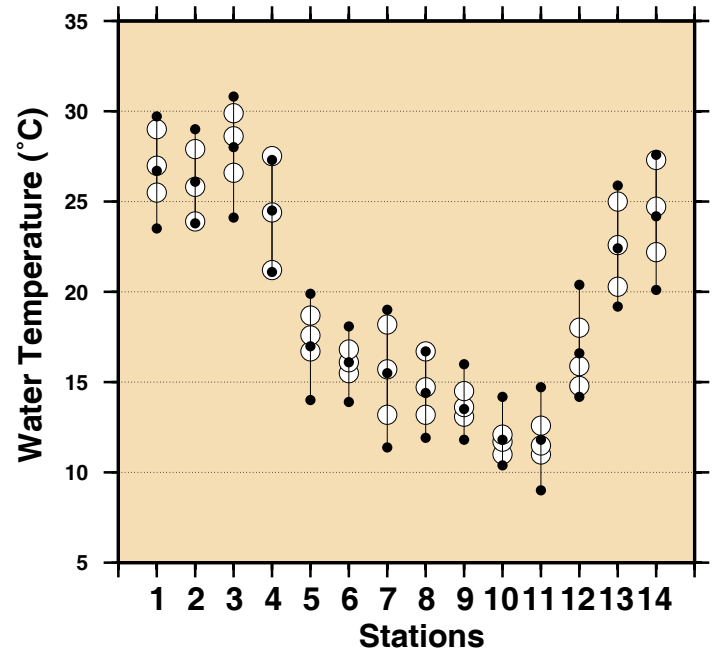
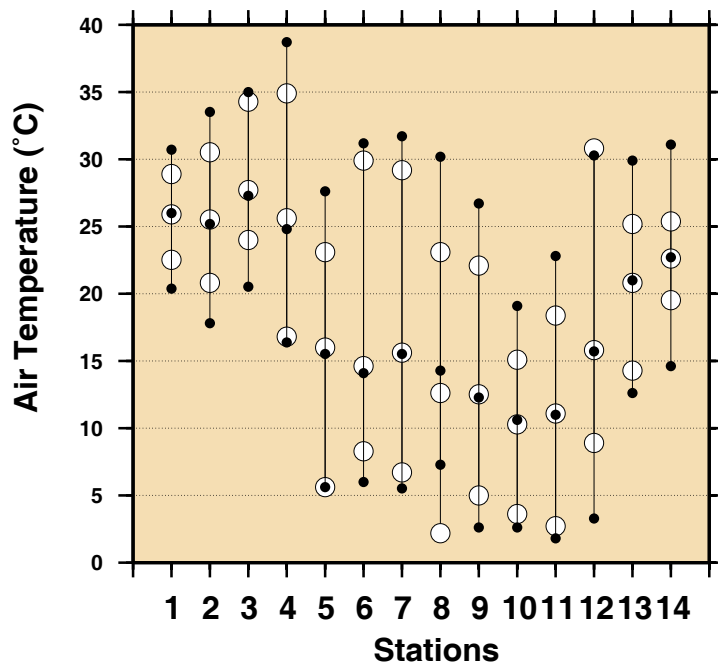


Figure 10
Comparison of September 2008 Max, Min & Mean with
Long Term September Values.



Stations

- 1 - Cocos Islands
- 2 - Groote Eylandt
- 3 - Darwin
- 4 - Broome
- 5 - Hillarys
- 6 - Esperance
- 7 - Thevenard
- 8 - Port Stanvac
- 9 - Portland
- 10 - Burnie
- 11 - Spring Bay
- 12 - Port Kembla
- 13 - Rosslyn Bay
- 14 - Cape Ferguson

- September 2008 Maximum
- September 2008 Mean
- September 2008 Minimum
- Long Term September Maximum
- Long Term September Mean
- Long Term September Minimum

Figure 11

MONTHLY MEAN SEA LEVELS TO SEPTEMBER 2008 (m)

The zero line represents an arbitrary fixed offset from the zero of the tide gauge.

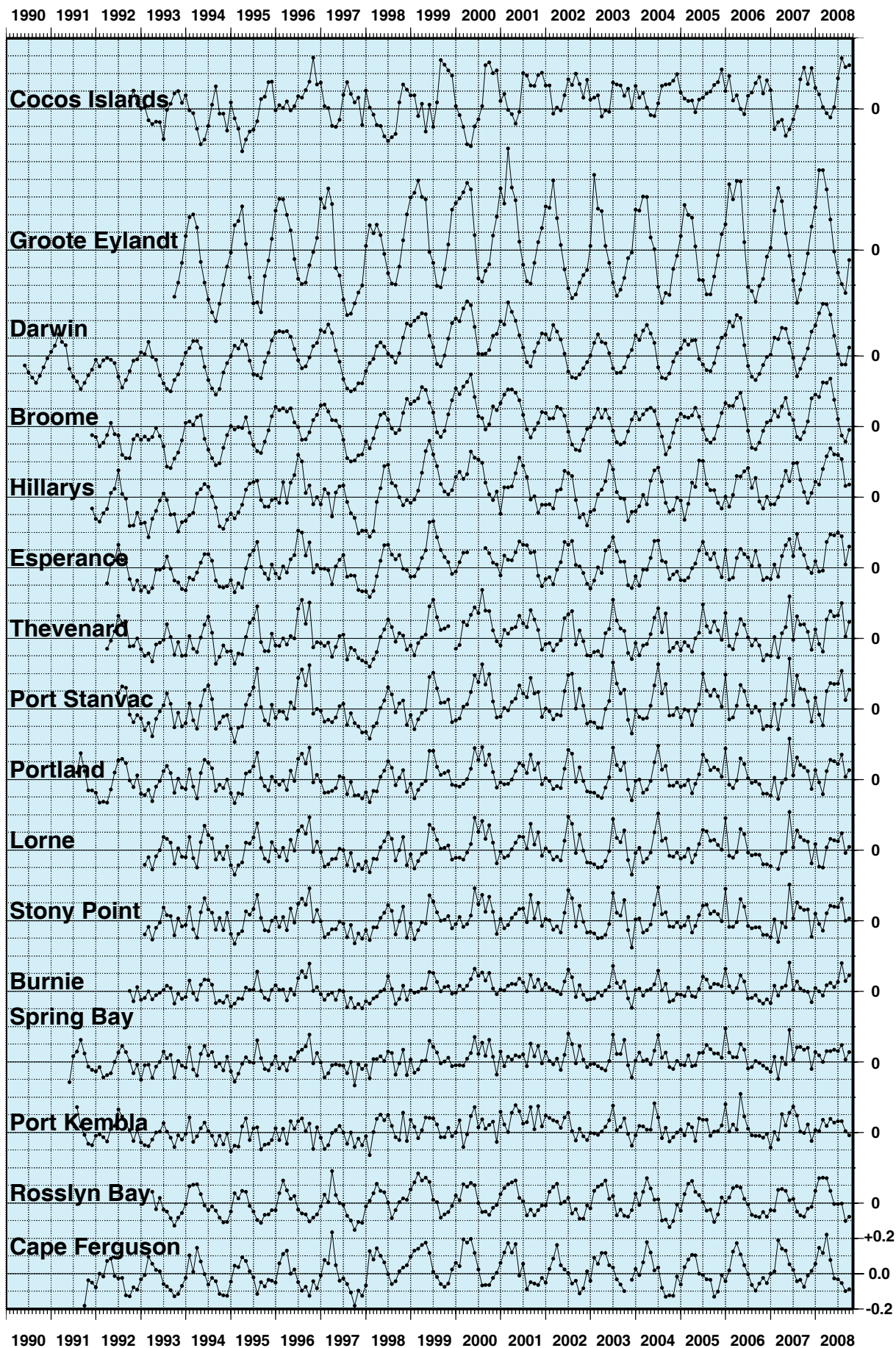


Figure 12
SEA LEVEL ANOMALIES THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2008 (m)

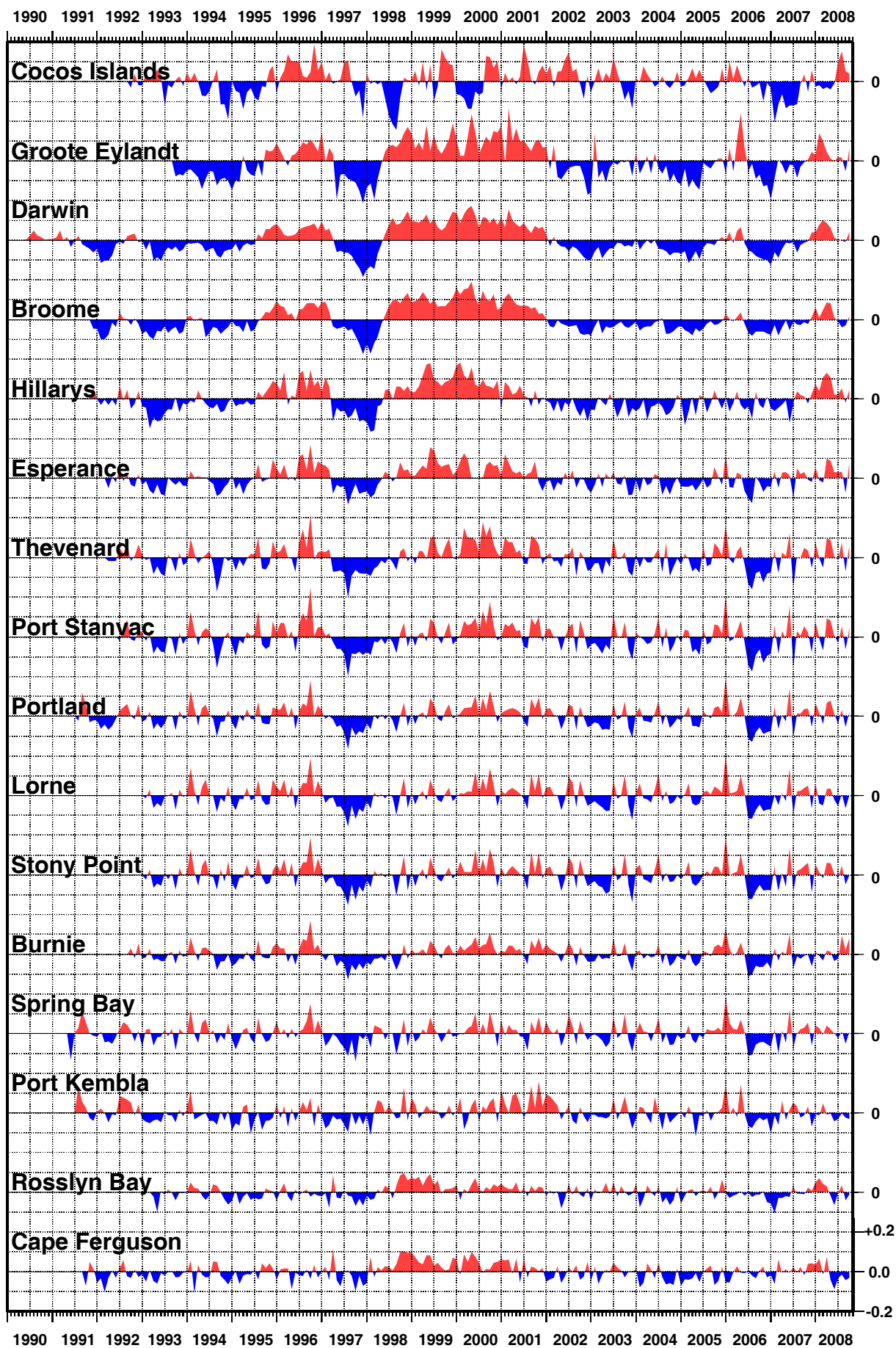


Figure 13

SEA LEVEL TRENDS THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2008 (mm/year)

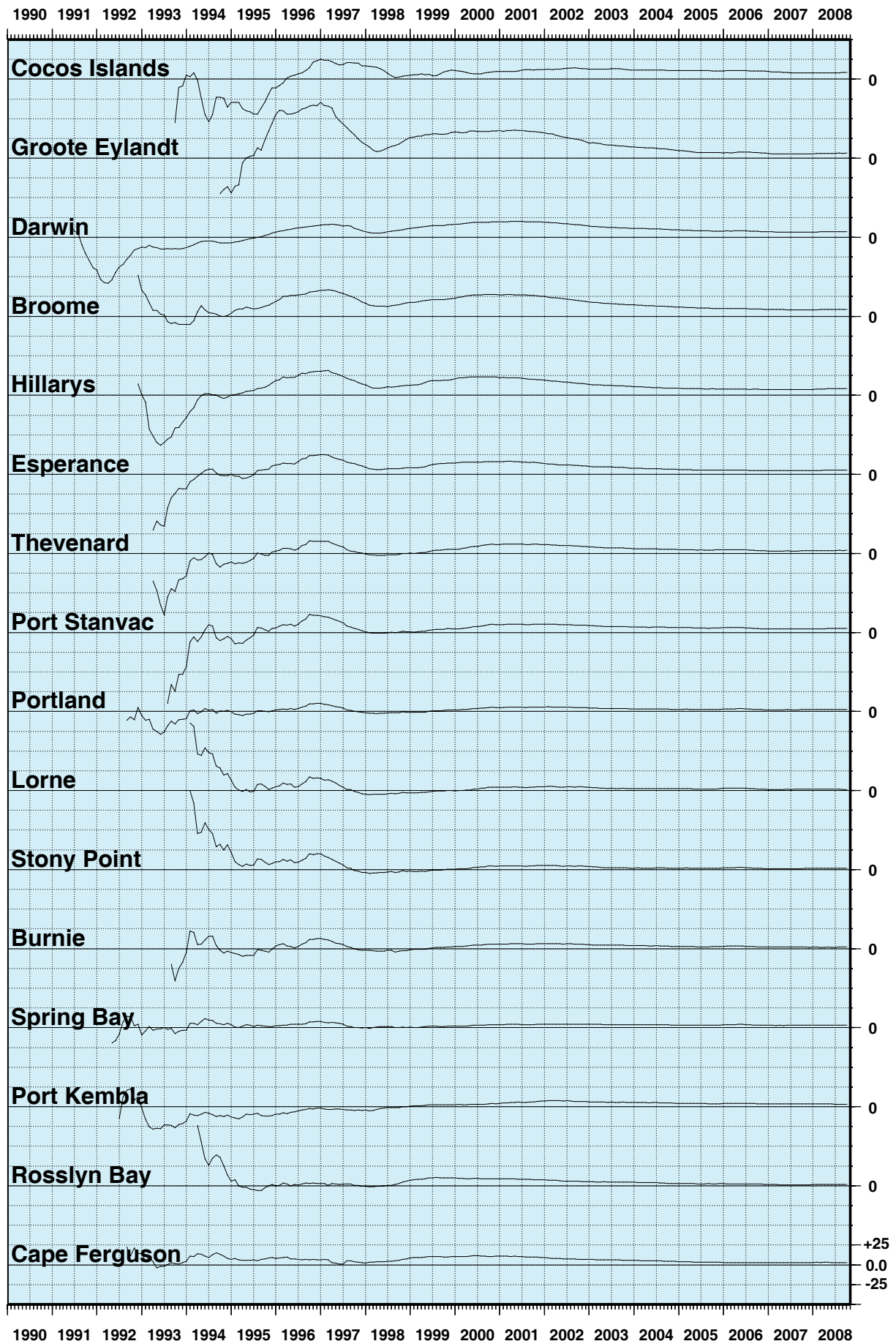


Figure 14

BAROMETRIC PRESSURE ANOMALIES THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2008 (hPa)

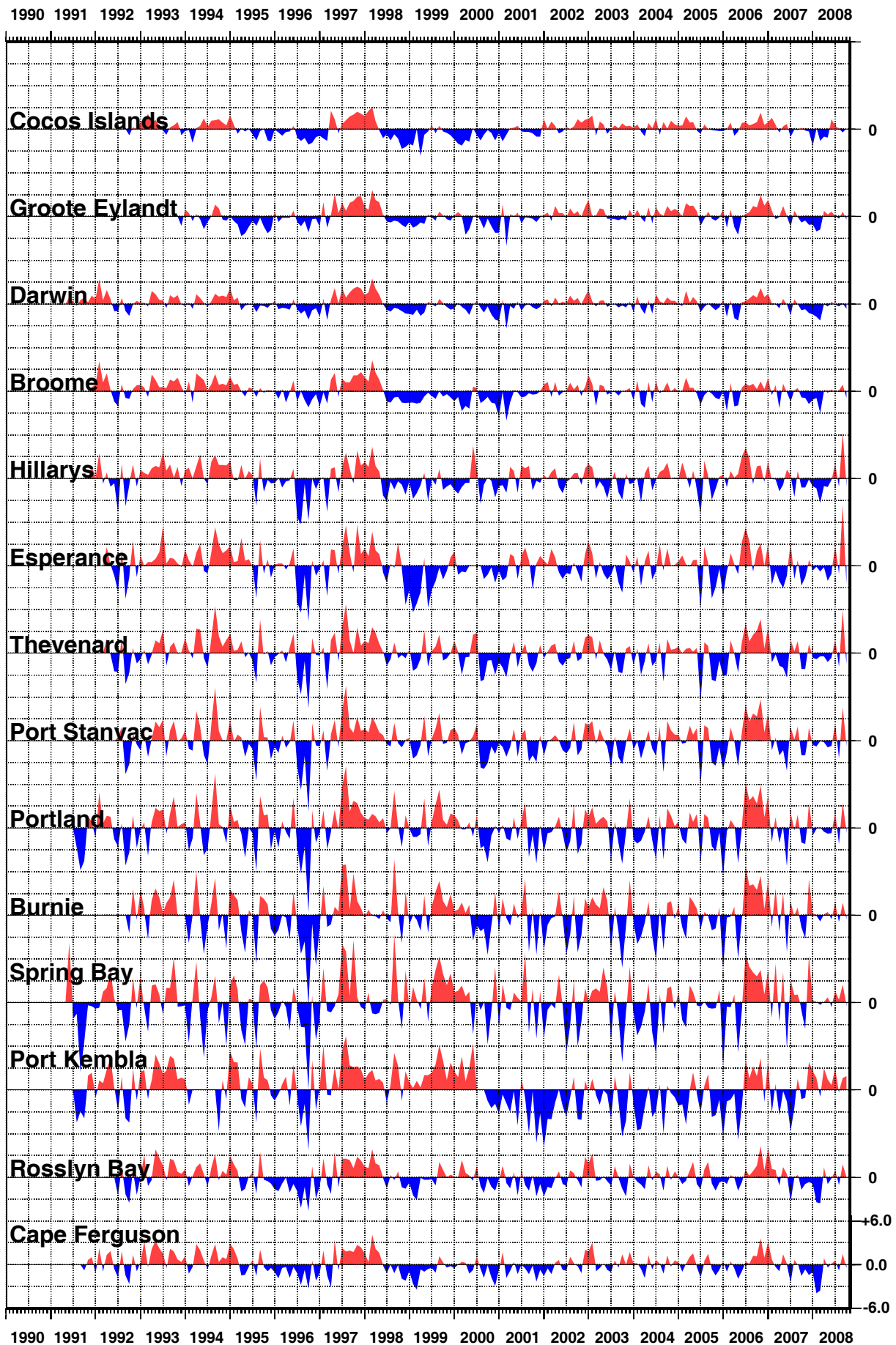


Figure 15

WATER TEMPERATURE ANOMALIES THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2008 (°C)

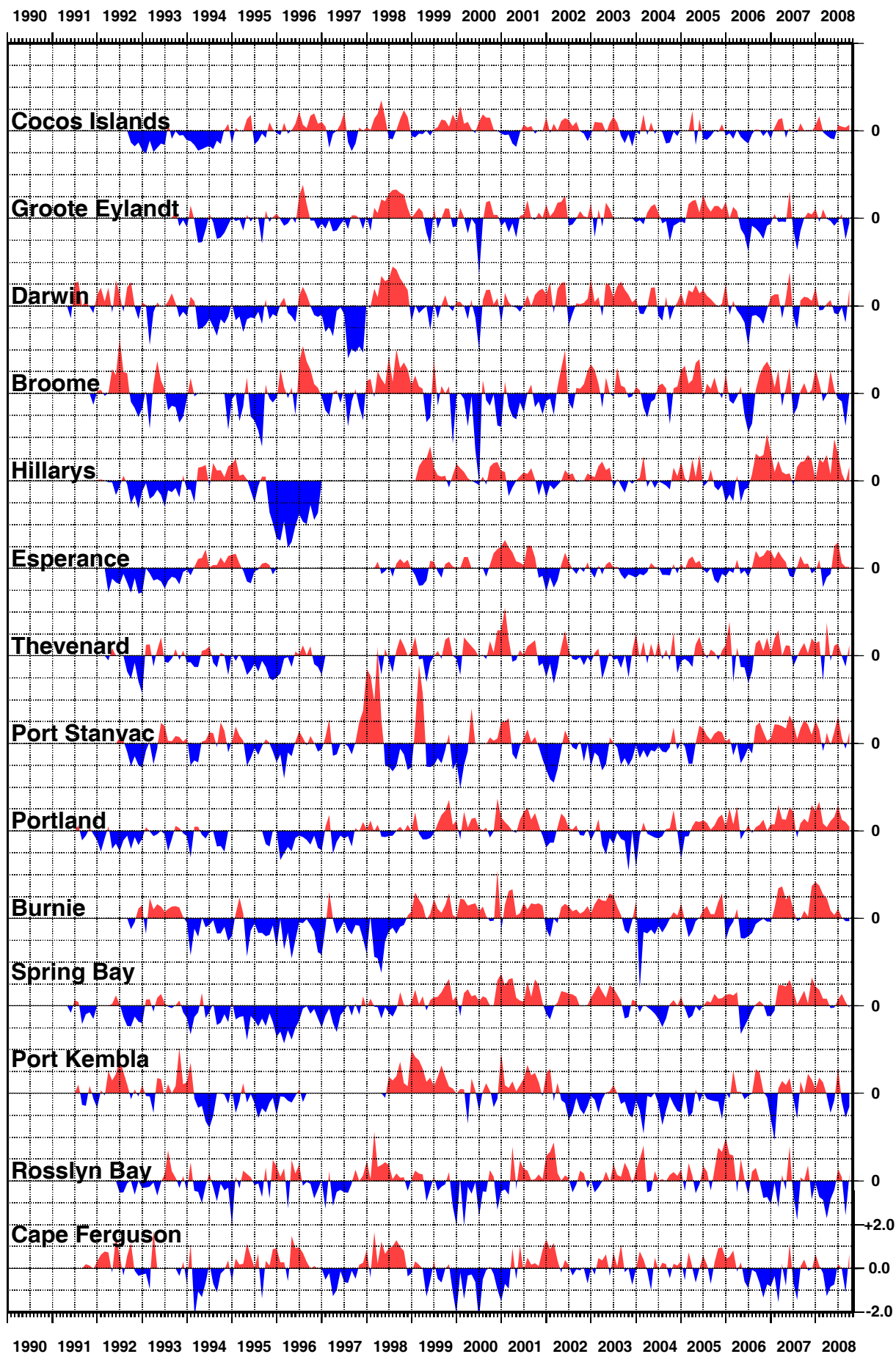


Figure 16
AIR TEMPERATURE ANOMALIES
THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2008 (°C)

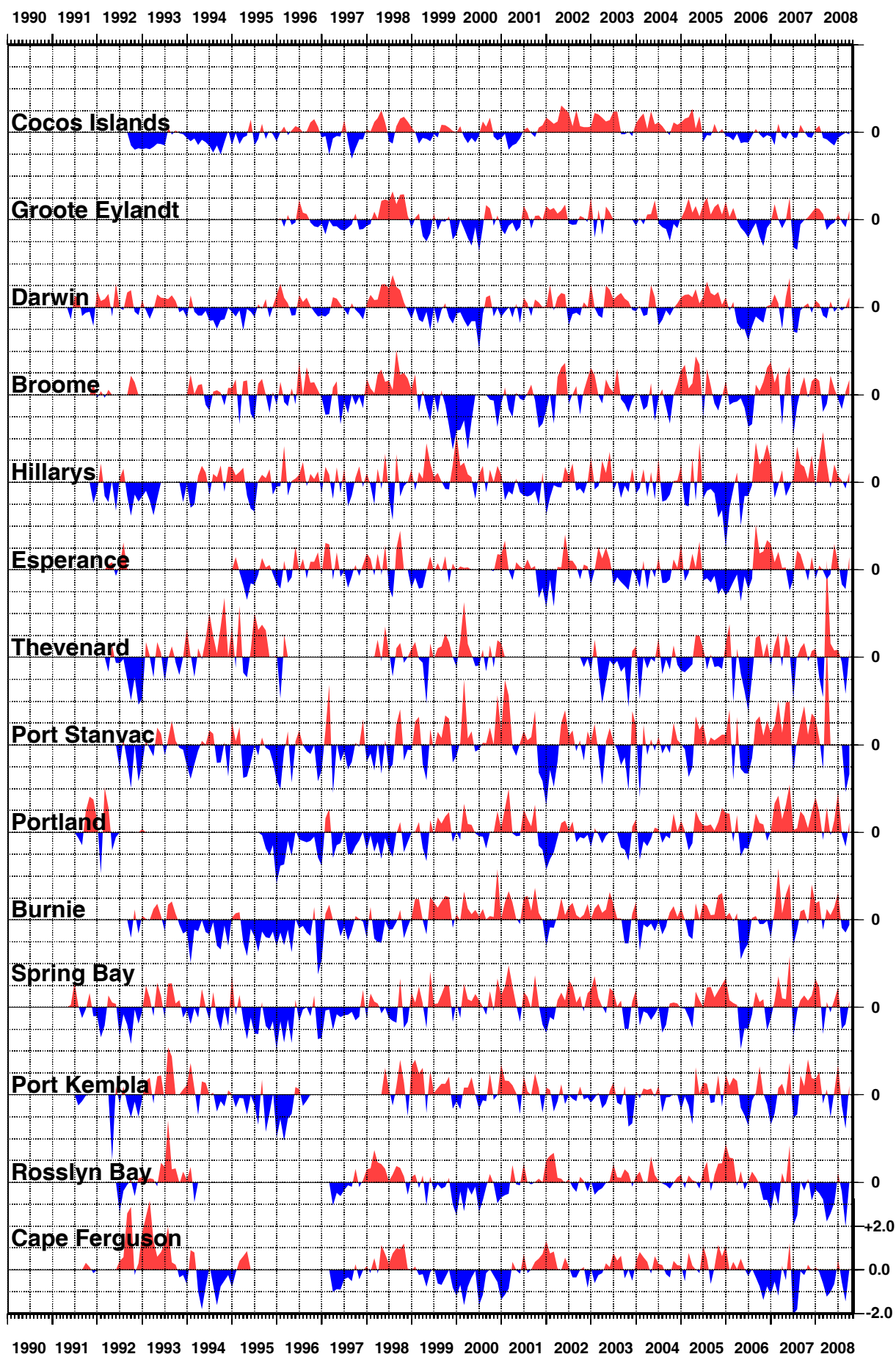


Figure 17 SEA LEVEL DATA RETURN

THE NUMBER OF DAYS OF MISSING DATA ARE INDICATED
GAPS INCLUDE TRANSMISSION, POWER AND LOGGER FAILURE

* Patchy record

