

1 Identification of the honey bee swarming process by
2 analysing the time course of hive vibrations.

3
4 Martin Bencsik¹, Joseph Bencsik, Michael Baxter¹, and
5 Andrei Lucian, Julien Romieu and Mathias Millet.

6
7 ¹College of Science,
8 Nottingham Trent University
9 Clifton Lane, NG11 8NS Nottingham
10 United Kingdom

11
12 **Corresponding author:** Martin Bencsik, School of Science and Technology,
13 Nottingham Trent University, Clifton campus, NG11 8NS Nottingham, UK, phone
14 (44)115 848 8057, fax (44) 115 848 66 36, e.mail: martin.bencsik@ntu.ac.uk

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23

ABSTRACT

Honey bees live in groups of approximately 40 000 individuals and go through their reproductive cycle by the swarming process, during which the old queen leaves the nest with numerous workers and drones to form a new colony. In the spring time, many clues can be seen in the hive, which sometimes demonstrate the proximity to swarming, such as the presence of more or less mature queen cells. In spite of this the actual date and time of swarming cannot be predicted accurately, as we still need to better understand this important physiological event. Here we show that, by means of a simple transducer secured to the outside wall of a hive, a set of statistically independent instantaneous vibration signals of honey bees can be identified and monitored in time using a fully automated and non-invasive method. The amplitudes of the independent signals form a multi-dimensional time-varying vector which was logged continuously for eight months. We found that combined with specifically tailored weighting factors, this vector provides a signature highly specific to the swarming process and its build up in time, thereby shedding new light on it and allowing its prediction several days in advance. The output of our monitoring method could be used to provide other signatures highly specific to other physiological processes in honey bees, and applied to better understand health issues recently encountered by pollinators.

Key words: honey bee;swarming;vibrations;pca.

1. INTRODUCTION

Honey bees live in societies of several thousands of individuals and form the object of much scientific work due to the complexity and sophistication of their behaviour. Following the major advances in this field brought by Karl von Frish (Frish, 1967), extensive work has been done focusing on further understanding the way honey bees communicate, in particular with acoustic noise and body vibrations.

In the waggle dance 280 Hz sounds are produced modulated by a 15 Hz body wag (Michelsen A., 1999, pp. 111-131), performed directly on the comb (although not involving abdominal contact). It has been shown (Tautz J., 1996) that the substrate on which the dance is performed affects the quality of the communication process (although plastic comb foundations do not (Seeley T.D. *et al.*, 2005), that bee legs are most sensitive to propagating (in the comb) longitudinal vibrations between 30 and 100 Hz (Sandeman D.C. *et al.*, 1996), that vibrations found in the comb between 200 and 300 Hz are significantly enhanced during the waggle phase (Nieh J. and Tautz J., 2000), and that phase reversal of the propagating wave occurs in close proximity to the dancer, at a distance at which followers are seen to be most frequently attracted to the messenger (Tautz J. *et al.*, 2001).

Studies of sound radiated by bees have focused on the sound field of single bees (Michelsen A. *et al.*, 1987), and it appears that follower bees tend to place their antennae in the zone of maximum acoustical short-circuiting. The properties of ‘piping’, a specific sound pulse which has been shown to be intimately linked with the preparation for swarming (Seeley T.D. and Tautz J., 2001; Visscher P.K. and Seeley T.D., 2007), has also been studied in terms of acoustic noise, both for ‘worker piping’

1 (Seeley T.D. and Tautz J., 2001; Visscher P.K. and Seeley T.D., 2007) and ‘queen
2 piping’ (Kirchner W.H., 1997, pp. 273-300). Measurements of the sound radiated by a
3 collection of bees has been reported in the scientific literature (Ferrari, 2008), by
4 placing a microphone on the top of the frames of a hive. This only provides crude and
5 unreliable short term recordings, although the authors have some evidence that these
6 can indicate the preparation for the swarming process. Similar microphone
7 measurements are also found in a few patents (Bromenshenk *et al.*, 2007; Etter R. *et al.*,
8 2007; Bromenshenk *et al.*, 2009) including exemplification data by which the inventors
9 demonstrate that upon exposure to predatory mites or to sub-lethal concentrations of a
10 few specific airborne toxicants, differing signatures may be extracted from the measured
11 honey bee sound. A separate patent (Woods, 1957) claims that a set of simple band pass
12 filters applied to the acoustic noise of bees may be a good indicator of the vicinity of the
13 swarming process but no exemplification data is made available to the reader to
14 substantiate the claim.

15 Very recently, a device for the long term logging of important features of honey bee
16 sounds in a hive has also been successfully developed (Atauri, 2009).

17

18 Those honey bees that are managed by humans often live in wooden hives, and these
19 emit acoustic noise that can clearly be heard if the ear is located near enough to it. In
20 periods of very high activity, the mechanical vibrations sustained in the hive’s outer box
21 can also be sensed simply by placing the hand on the wood.

22

23 In our work these vibrations were sensed by two accelerometers secured onto the outer
24 wall of two separate hives, approximately 3 meters away from one other, each

1 comprising of a healthy colony of *Apis mellifera* honey bees. We are focusing on
2 analysing this ‘by-product’ of honey bee activity, to show that it comprises of complex
3 global information, rather than taking the microscopic approach of exploring the
4 insect’s individual communication process.

5

6 We present one method for processing this raw data in order to extract a specific time
7 varying signature comprising ten independent components, and demonstrate that this
8 can be applied to identify and predict the swarming process several days in advance.

9

10 **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

11

12 **2.1. Honey bees under investigation.**

13

14 Two *Langstroth* hives were monitored in Jarnioux, France (Latitude (DMS) 45° 58' 0N
15 Longitude (DMS) 4° 37' 60E Altitude (meters) 271). They were located in close (10
16 meters) proximity to a house comprising a computer indoors (Pentium III 800 MHz
17 CPU running a Linux operating system). A simple roof was placed above the monitored
18 hives to prevent vibrations caused by rain drops directly falling onto them. The two
19 colonies were looked after with minimal interference, although they were fed during the
20 winter.

21 Swarming was witnessed by one of the authors on several occasions:

- 22 • 3rd of May for hive 1 (11:30 am) and hive 2 (5:30 pm),
- 23 • 30th of April, 2nd and 11th of May for hive 2.

1 We found out that by mistake a queen excluder had been placed at the bottom of the
2 broodbox of the second hive. This caused six unsuccessful swarms (three of which were
3 witnessed) for that hive until the queen was left to go by opening a hole in the front
4 wall, generating a final seventh swarm (also witnessed). The first hive swarmed twice,
5 one of which was witnessed.

6

7 **2.2. Vibration data collection**

8

9 A 5 mm deep cavity was drilled in the wood of the back of each hive, in the centre, with
10 a diameter causing a tight fit to the accelerometers. The transducers (Isotron 7259B-10,
11 Endevco, San Juan Capistrano, U.S.A.) were connected to a dual channel conditioner
12 (Nexus, Brüel and Kjær; Nærum, Denmark) residing between the two hives, and
13 encased in a water tight acrylic box to minimise moisture ingress into the electronics.
14 Having checked that the signal above 4000 Hz was negligible, the analogue output
15 channels of the conditioner were fed into the sound card of the indoors computer, by
16 means of individual shielded coaxial cables, for 16 bit, 8000 Hz sampling rate
17 digitisation and storage on a 500 GB external hard disk.

18 Four very gentle knocks were supplied by hand to each hive, and we could not measure
19 any crosstalk from the two resulting digitised waves, although both hives sat on the
20 same wooden beams, approximately one meter above the ground. The waves recorded
21 from the knocks were additionally used to estimate the resonant frequencies of the hives
22 under investigation. We also checked that large external acoustic noise such as lorries
23 passing nearby (~ 100 m away) did not induce measurable signal in our recordings. The
24 vibrations (i.e. a deformation wave propagating in wood/wax) that are sensed are

1 therefore mainly coming from (i) the acoustic noise (a pressure wave propagating in air)
2 from the honey bees inducing vibrations into the structure of the hive and (ii) the body
3 motion of the individual bees inducing vibrations through their legs residing on the
4 wax/wood.

5 The computer started logging the vibrations in individual files of time duration of one
6 hour each, from the 1st of November 2008 until the 9th of April 2009, when a power cut
7 interrupted the recording (well before the swarming season). It was launched again on
8 the 11th of April 2009 until a second power cut stopped and damaged the computer on
9 the 17th of June 2009.

10

11 **2.3. Data processing**

12

13 The time course of the measured vibrations mostly comes from several thousands of
14 honey bee individuals which may be seen as a collection of transient pulsed oscillators
15 with random individual phases. The raw signal is therefore too noisy for direct analysis.

16 By computing short frequency spectra that are averaged together, a very clear curve
17 with pronounced peaks may be rapidly obtained, which suggests that the vibrations
18 induced by the oscillators have similar spectral features in spite of their lack of phase
19 coherence. The time duration of an individual sample for computing one instantaneous
20 spectrum determines its frequency resolution whilst the time duration over which it is
21 averaged dictates the signal to noise ratio of the signal. A good compromise was found
22 for a frequency resolution of 20 Hz and an averaging time of 510 seconds.

1 Using a purpose-built computer script (in matlab®, as is for all software presented in
2 this work), these averaged spectra were computed for the entire data set, and stacked in
3 one day long images called spectrograms for visual inspection.

4
5 The next processing task consisted in extracting an instantaneous ‘feature’ that one can
6 use as a ‘signature’ of a specific state of activity of the honey bee hive. To date we have
7 used (Baxter, 2003) principal component analysis (PCA).

8
9 Given n observations on p variables X_i , $i = 1, \dots, p$, PCA as most commonly used
10 involves a linear transformation to p orthogonal variables, Z_i , the principal components,
11 If \mathbf{X} is the original n by p data matrix then \mathbf{Z} , the n by p matrix of principal component
12 scores, contains exactly the same information as \mathbf{X} . A major use of PCA is as a
13 dimension reduction technique, whereby the first r columns of \mathbf{Z} can be used to
14 ‘approximate’ \mathbf{X} , where r is much less than p . This, allied to the orthogonality of the Z_i ,
15 allows patterns in the data to be explored much more readily in r or fewer dimensions
16 than with the original data matrix. It is sometimes possible to assign a ‘meaning’ to the
17 components, but this is not essential for the method to be useful.

18
19 Specializing to our application, the rows and columns of \mathbf{X} correspond to frequency and
20 time, and can be interchanged. Entries in the data matrix correspond to (averaged)
21 amplitudes. Both frequency and time have a natural ordering that can be exploited in
22 interpreting the principal components, which we call ‘eigenspectra’ in this study. Often,
23 as is the case for our data, relatively few components are needed to explain most of the

1 variation in the data, and time plots based on the first few components can identify
2 normal hive activity that changes when, for example swarming is about to occur.

3

4 The entire time series of $n = 37856$ spectra for each hive was analysed by PCA on
5 centred but unstandardised data, using a separate script which takes 53 ms to converge
6 (for one hive) on a 2.4 GHz CPU computer. Following this, any averaged spectrum can
7 be expressed as a linear combination of the Z_i eigenspectra, to which the mean spectrum
8 (over the entire data set) must be added.

9 The weighting factors required for a specific ‘reconstruction’ are called scores, and at
10 any point in time an instantaneous spectrum can be perfectly described by the linear
11 combination of the corresponding p instantaneous scores and p eigenspectra (which are
12 valid for the entire data set), where p is the number of digital points in one spectrum (p
13 = 200 for the compromise that we chose in this study. Higher p requires longer spectral
14 averaging time, in order to keep the same Signal to Noise). Alternatively, an
15 approximate description of an instantaneous spectrum may be obtained by reducing the
16 number of scores and eigenspectra (e.g. from $p = 200$ to $r = 10$) used in the linear
17 combination.

18

19 **3. RESULTS**

20

21 **3.1. Spectrograms.**

22

23 The one day-long spectrograms of the two hives are shown in Figure 1 for a specific
24 day. For both hives four to five ‘bands’ are clearly seen, the strongest being around

1 2000 Hz. Small frequency differences can be seen between the two hives, resulting from
2 a combination of different hives and, perhaps, from differences coming from the honey
3 bee colonies themselves. Continuous activity in the night can be seen as well as
4 amplitude variations over two orders of magnitudes. The second hive provides
5 approximately twice more signal than the first one.

6

7 **3.2. PCA filtering of honey bee signal.**

8

9 We established that at any point in time the linear combination of the first ten scores
10 and eigenspectra gives an excellent reproduction of the original spectrum (Figure 2).
11 The eigenspectra were also inspected visually and those corresponding to orders higher
12 than ten essentially contain noise. In our data the information relevant to honey bee
13 activity can be approximated very well by a PCA analysis using $r = 10$.

14

15 **3.3. Eigenspectra.**

16

17 The eigenspectra for both hives exhibit remarkable similarities, and those of hive 1 are
18 shown in Fig. 3. Fortunately, the effect of eigenspectra with order higher than one can
19 often be interpreted in terms of three major features: shifting specific peaks
20 (corresponding to a change in signal frequency), changing their relative amplitudes
21 (corresponding to the strength of the vibration at a given frequency) or width
22 (corresponding to the time duration of the pulsed oscillators causing the vibrations).
23 Comparison with the spectrum of the hive resonances shows marked discrepancies, but

1 we have not attempted at compensating our data for the natural ‘transfer function’ that
2 the hive provides between the honey bee vibrations and our measurements.

3 4 **3.4. Scores.**

5
6 Visual inspection of the spectrograms mostly reveals very large variations of the
7 signal’s overall amplitude. These variations are captured in the time course of the scores
8 on the first order principal component (PC), or eigenspectrum. The PC scores with a
9 higher order (two and above) reveal subtle variations in the signal (Fig. 4) that are not
10 obvious to the naked eye on the spectrograms, but highly relevant to honey bee activity,
11 as will be demonstrated in this work.

12 To allow suitable visualisation of the results, the first order score in Figure 4 has been
13 scaled down so as to reach the same maximum value as the second one, whilst the
14 others have not been scaled. For the first hive and second hive respectively, on average,
15 the ratio of the first to the second order score is found to be six and twenty. This is in
16 good agreement with the visual inspection of the hives, as by opening them prior and
17 following the study it was quite clear that the second one was more populated and
18 ‘stronger’ than the first one.

19 20 **3.5. Identification of the swarming process.**

21
22 The relevance of the time course of the scores was specifically tested on the process of
23 swarming. The swarming events that have been witnessed were first inspected on the
24 spectrograms and on the time course of the scores. These plots were also inspected after

1 the 11th of May and before the 3rd of May, where no swarming was witnessed or
2 possible (winter time). When described by the time course of the scores, the swarming
3 events were found to exhibit a unique set of combined features (Fig. 5) never seen
4 together in the winter days or those following the 11th of May: a gradual, exponential-
5 like divergence of most of the scores over approximately five to ten hours, followed by
6 a peaked amplitude over a single point in time (i.e. over 8.5 mins), followed by a
7 reversal of polarity of some scores and an extremely low set of amplitudes thereafter
8 (except for scores directly expressing frequency shifts).

9
10 A simple quantitative study of the vibrational measurements of the building-up of the
11 swarming event was undertaken for the first hive, which swarmed “naturally”. The
12 second hive’s swarming data is affected by the misplaced queen excluder, and is
13 therefore biased. For hive 1, the witnessed swarming was selected, and the 5 hours of
14 spectrogram immediately preceding the highest vibration at the end of the divergence of
15 the data was selected. The cross-correlation function between this section of data and
16 the entire data set was calculated as a function of time, and this did not yield specific
17 peaks in the vicinity of the swarming. The cross-correlation function was then
18 calculated for each individual score of the same section of data. A clear build-up of the
19 amplitude of the function was seen within several days preceding swarming for the
20 scores of order 5, 9 and 10 (Figure 6), whilst those maxima seen elsewhere for the
21 scores with other orders did not seem to relate to the swarming.

22 We then investigated the relative importance of specific scores, with regards to
23 detecting the swarming event from our data. A script was written to compute a cross-
24 correlation function combining each of the ten scores with independent weighting

1 factors. The script uses the “fminsearch” Matlab® algorithm and attempts at
2 maximising and minimising the function when using a section respectively during
3 swarming and outside swarming. The section that we selected to maximise the function
4 was limited at the end of the witnessed swarm, and its start can be chosen at any time
5 between one to ten days prior to it, without changing the result. The selected section for
6 minimisation was limited by the end of the data, and can be started at any time between
7 two to ten days before, which correspond to 45 days and 35 days after the first and
8 second peak of the function. The results shown in Figure 7 suggest that swarming can
9 be detected several days in advance and that a secondary swarm (not witnessed)
10 emerged ten days after the first one, as is often seen in hives that are not interfered with
11 (Winston, 1987).

12

13 **3.6. Sunrise activity.**

14

15 For both hives on most of our spectrograms acquired after the 10th of March (see Fig. 1.
16 and Fig. 2.) a clear peak of vibrational activity can be seen in the early hours of the
17 morning. This was further investigated by looking at the time course of individual
18 scores (Fig. 8.), which we superimposed with the time course of the sunrise*.

19

20

21 **4. Discussion and further work.**

22

1 We have shown that a non-invasive and automated method can provide to be a useful
2 monitoring device, by analysis of the time course of the normal vibrations recorded on
3 the wall of a honey bee hive.

4 We chose to use accelerometers in our work, which, to our knowledge, have never been
5 tried as hive monitoring sensors. Although not published in the professional literature,
6 we know from our own experience and that of others (Michelsen A., 2005) that
7 **microphone** measurements are only sensitive to a few bees in the close vicinity of the
8 microphone, that bees passing nearby can cause huge transient signals, that unwanted
9 external noises such as bird singing or airplanes or motorcars can often be picked up,
10 and that long-term monitoring is severely restricted due to the natural propensity bees
11 exhibit to coat with propolis any body that is alien to their natural habitat. The published
12 work that involves microphone measurements is restricted to relatively short sequences
13 (Bromenshenk *et al.*, 2007; Etter R. *et al.*, 2007; Bromenshenk *et al.*, 2009), and/or
14 single bee measurements (Michelsen A. *et al.*, 1987), and/or measurements done in a
15 hive which probably senses a few hundred bees (Ferrari, 2008), which are continuously
16 moving in and out of the volume to which the microphone is sensitive. Vibrational data
17 has also been measured by **video** analysis of transparent hives (Schneider, 2004;
18 Brennan, 2007). Such measurement requires specialised transparent hive hardware and
19 cannot easily be undertaken in the natural darkness to which honey bees are used.

20 Lengthy measurements end up in very large data sets, and analysis is, to our knowledge,
21 only possible by human ‘manual’ analysis. Another possibility is to measure substrate
22 born vibrations with **laser Doppler vibrometry** (Nieh J. and Tautz J., 2000; Tautz J.,
23 2001; Seeley, 2005), which is sensitive to the solid boundary displacement. This
24 technique is exquisitely sensitive to the smallest relative displacement between the

1 sample and the vibrometer, and has not, to our knowledge, been applied to either *in-situ*
2 or long-term measurements. It is however expensive, suffers from slow drifts due to
3 temperature changes, and from any optical interference such as dirt particles gradually
4 building up on the light path. A less expensive approach, for individual insects, is to
5 measure vibrations using the **stylus** of a ceramic cartridge in contact with a substrate
6 (Reader and Duce, 2009). Such an approach relies on the measurement of displacement
7 of the substrate, and is generally thought less sensitive, with a lower signal-to-noise
8 ratio, than similar techniques employing an accelerometer.

9 Without the need for combining our method with weather or other measurements, we
10 have shown that a quantity highly specific to the swarming process is seen to grow
11 increasingly strong, several days in advance of the witnessed swarm. The identification
12 of swarming in the vibration data requires PCA analysis, with the extraction of PC
13 scores of fairly high orders.

14

15 We have discovered a peak in honey bee vibrational activity, early in the morning,
16 which matches the sun rise timings, which we have not seen reported in the literature
17 elsewhere.

18

19 Our spectra reveal vibrations coming from honey bees, but the information is severely
20 weighted by the resonances of the hive's solid structure. In spite of this we have found
21 remarkable similarities in some of our spectral patterns with that of other workers.
22 Whilst we see pronounced peaks at 250, 500, 750 and 2000 Hz, others have mostly
23 focused on acoustic noise peaks, and have found similar low frequency peaks. Dietlein
24 (Dietlein, 1985) has found noise to be concentrated around 300, 410 and 510 Hz, Eren's

1 data (Eren, 1997) suggests peaks at 235 ± 35 Hz and 425 ± 25 Hz, and the latest
2 published spectra (Ferrari, 2008) exhibits clear peaks at 150 Hz and 300 Hz. Clearly this
3 suggests that our two first peaks are directly due to honey bee vibrations whilst the
4 higher frequencies are most probably harmonics of the hive structure's resonant modes,
5 indirectly stimulated by honey bee activity.

6

7 In the future it would be desirable to relate the specific vibrations to physical processes
8 involving honey bee activities, such as body and wing vibrations, and to better
9 understand the means by which they are conveyed to the transducers (wax, wood,
10 resonances of the structures). Vibrations in two other tangential directions and also in
11 separate locations could provide improved or novel information. Other processes than
12 the swarming could be explored and monitored, as well as other social insects which
13 live in large enough groups (wasps, bumble-bees). The process of swarming itself might
14 be better understood by combining this study with a weather monitoring logging device,
15 and with measurements relating the hive's population with the magnitude of the
16 vibrations. Using pattern recognition algorithms that are more sophisticated than the
17 simple cross-correlation function is also a way forward when corroborative
18 measurements are available such as video monitoring. Finally, by using hives in well
19 controlled laboratory environment, very low frequencies (frequencies lower than 120
20 Hz have been dismissed in this study) could be sensed, such as those used for other
21 important processes clarified by other workers (Schneider, 2007).

22

23 **Acknowledgements**

1 We are grateful to Dr. Robert Morris, NTU, who wrote the Linux script continuously
2 storing the digitised data in individual short files, * to Dr. Daniel Brown, NTU, who
3 worked out the sun rise times from the location of the hives, to Antoine and Joseph
4 Bencsik for looking after the 8 month-long continuous recording, and to NTU who
5 partly funded this work through a SPUR summer work bursary which Andrei Lucian
6 benefited from.

7

8

9 **References**

10

11 Atauri D. and Llorente J., 2009. Platform for bee-hives monitoring based on sound
12 analysis. A perpetual warehouse for swarm's daily activity. Spanish Journal of
13 Agricultural Research. 7 (4), 824-828.

14

15 Baxter, M., 2003. Statistics in Archeology. John Wiley and Sons.

16

17 Brennan B., 2007. Abdominal wagging in the social paper wasp *Polistes*
18 *dominulus* : Behavior and substrate vibrations, *Ethology*, 113, 692-702.

19

20 Bromenshenk et al., 2007. US 2007/0224914 A1.

21

22 Bromenshenk et al., 2009. US 7549907 B2.

23

24 Dietlein D.G., 1985. A method for remote monitoring of activity of honeybee
25 colonies by sound analysis. *Journal of Apicultural Research*, 24 (3), 176-183.

26

27 Etter R. et al., 2007. CA 2 573 049.

28

1 Ferrari S. et al., 2008. Monitoring of swarming sounds in bee hives for early
2 detection of the swarming period. *Computers and Electronics in Agriculture*. 64, 72-
3 77.
4
5 Kirchner W.H., 1997. *Orientation and Communication in Arthropods*. (Lehrer M.
6 Ed.) Birkenhäuser Verlag, Basel.
7
8 Michelsen A. et al., 1987. The acoustic near-field of a dancing honeybee. *Journal of*
9 *Comparative Physiology A*, 161, 633-643.
10
11 Michelsen A., 1999. The Dance Language of Honeybees: Recent Findings and
12 Problems, in: *The Design of Animal Communication* (MD Hauser and M Konishi,
13 Eds.) MIT Press.
14
15 Michelsen A., 2005. Personal communication.
16
17 Nieh J. and Tautz J., 2000. Behaviour-locked signal analysis reveals weak 200-300
18 Hz comb vibrations during the honeybee waggle dance. *Journal of Experimental*
19 *Biology*, 203, 1573-1579.
20
21 Reader T. and Duce I.R., 2009. Intraguild interactions promote assortative mating
22 and affect sexual attractiveness in a phytophagous fly, *Biological Journal of the*
23 *Linnean Society*, 98, 171-180.
24
25 Sandeman D.C. et al., 1996. Transmission of vibration across honeycombs and its
26 detection by bee leg receptors. *Journal of Experimental Biology*, 199, 2585-2594.
27
28 Schneider S.S. and Lewis L.L., 2004. The vibration signal, modulatory
29 communication and the organisation of labour in honey bees, *Apis mellifera*.
30 *Apidologie* 35, 117-131.
31

1 Schneider S., 2007. Vibration Signals and the Organisation of Labour in Honey Bee
2 Colonies. *Bee Craft*, 20-25.
3
4 Seeley T.D. and Tautz J., 2001. Worker piping in honey bee swarms and its role in
5 preparing for liftoff. *Journal of Comparative Physiology A*, 187, 667-676.
6
7 Seeley T.D. et al., 2005. Does plastic comb foundation hinder waggle dance
8 communication?. *Apidologie*, 36, 513-521.
9
10 Tautz J., 1996. Transmission of vibration across honeycombs and its detection by
11 bee leg receptors. *Journal of Experimental Biology*, 199, 1375-1381.
12
13 Tautz J. et al., 2001. Phase reversal of vibratory signals in honeycomb may assist
14 dancing honeybees to attract their audience. *Journal of Experimental Biology*, 204,
15 3737-3746.
16
17 Visscher P.K. and Seeley T.D., 2007. Coordinating a group departure: who produces
18 the piping signals on honeybee swarms?. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 61,
19 1615-1621.
20
21 Von Frisch K., 1967. *The dance language and orientation of bees*. Cambridge,
22 Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
23
24 Winston M.L., 1987. *The Biology of the Honey Bee*. Harvard University Press,
25 Cambridge.
26
27 Woods E.F., 1957. US 2,806,082.

1 FIGURE CAPTIONS

2

3 Figure 1. **Honey bee hive vibrations.** One day long spectrogram of the data collected
4 on hive one (top) and hive two (bottom) on the 15th of April 2009. The colour linearly
5 codes the amplitude of the acceleration (in arbitrary units, but identically scaled for both
6 data sets), for a time and a frequency given by the horizontal and vertical coordinates.

7

8 Figure 2. **PCA filtering of hive vibrations.** The data from hive 1 on the 15th of April
9 2009 is projected onto its set of eigenspectra. On the top, all of the 200 scores are used
10 to reconstruct the data, ending up in the same spectrogram as seen in Fig. 1. On the
11 bottom plot, 10 scores (and associated spectrograms) only are used. The PCA filtering
12 process removes unwanted noise, simplifies the analysis of the extracted data, and
13 preserves excellent temporal and frequency resolutions, unlike Fourier or spatial
14 convolution types of filtering.

15

16 Figure 3. **Eigenspectra of honey bee hive vibrations.** When comparing the two hives,
17 some strong features are found to be common to the two sets of eigenspectra: (i) they
18 exhibit oscillations around zero except for the first one which corresponds to the overall
19 amplitude of vibrations, (ii) four peaks are clearly identified around 500 Hz, 750 Hz,
20 2000 Hz and 3200 Hz, (iii) a pair of eigenspectra (here, No 3 and 5) causes a shift of the
21 frequency in two peaks in the same (No 3) or in opposite directions (No 5), whilst (iv)
22 another pair (here, No 2 and 4) allow the respective amplitudes of the peaks to be
23 adjusted independently. Some mild differences are also seen, probably due to a
24 combination of the hive natural resonances and the signature of the vibrations of a
25 colony being specific to a particular colony (those spectra shown here come from hive

1 1). The entire data set (37856 spectra each averaged over 8.5 minutes) was supplied to
2 our software to extract this data. The dotted line give an idea of the mechanical
3 resonances of the hive ensemble, obtained by Fourier transformation of the pulses
4 recorded with the hand knocks, although frequency-dependent attenuation coefficients
5 also participate in the shape of that curve.

6
7 **Figure 4. Spectrogram and scores.** On the top, the one day long spectrogram of the
8 data collected on hive 2 on the 6th of May 2009 is shown, together with the time-course
9 of the six most important scores (bottom) corresponding to the same day of activity. The
10 first order score spans much larger values than the others, and has been scaled down
11 (see text). A score taking a value of zero means that the corresponding eigenspectrum is
12 not needed at that time, as its contribution exactly matches that of the mean (over the
13 entire data set) spectrum. A score with, respectively, a positive or negative value
14 indicates that the corresponding eigenspectrum provides a contribution larger or weaker
15 than that required for the mean spectrum. One score does not correspond to a specific
16 honey bee vibrational activity, but any score provides a contribution to the total signal
17 that is statistically independent from any other score, since the eigenspectra have been
18 ensured to be all orthogonal to one another by PCA.

19
20 **Figure 5. Time course of scores on six different days.** The four witnessed swarms for
21 hive 2 are shown from **A** to **D**, that witnessed for hive 1 is shown in **E**, whilst a ‘normal’
22 day’s data well after the swarming season is shown in **F**, for comparison purposes. The
23 set of features (see text) seen for the swarming events are common to all five witnessed
24 swarming events (irrespective of the hive), and are never seen outside the swarming

1 season. The swarming signatures in **A**, **B** and **E** are remarkably similar (and happen at
2 the same time in the day, between 11 am and 1 pm), whilst those in **C** and **D**, occurring
3 later in the day (between 4 pm and 5 pm), are probably strongly affected by the queen
4 ‘trapped’ in the hive.

5 For all plots the first score has been scaled here as in Fig. 4.

6

7 **Figure 6. Time course of the swarming cross-correlation function for the 9th order**
8 **score of the first hive.** The red line indicates the day of the swarming event that has
9 been witnessed, which also comprises the five hours of data used for computing the
10 cross-correlation function. The function is negative at any time in the recording until 11
11 days before swarming where it becomes positive. The first maximum is extremely close
12 to the swarming event, the second one occurs ten days later where a secondary swarm
13 might have occurred. The curve is remarkably insensitive to the time duration of the
14 selected swarming section, provided that it is between two to ten hours, and
15 demonstrates the emergence of a vibrational ‘pattern’ highly specific to the swarming
16 process.

17

18 **Figure 7. Time course of the weighted cross-correlation function for the first hive.**
19 The weighting factors have been optimised as indicated in the text. The colour codes the
20 cross-correlation function, in arbitrary units. On the left, all values are shown, clearly
21 demonstrating a discontinuity of the data to negative values after the 23rd of May. On
22 the right, all negative values have been forced to take the deep blue color, so that on the
23 basis of that threshold an ‘alarm’ relevant to the swarming event can be triggered with

1 increasing confidence from mid-April onwards. A few false alarms appear in winter but
2 they are not followed by an increasing value of the function.

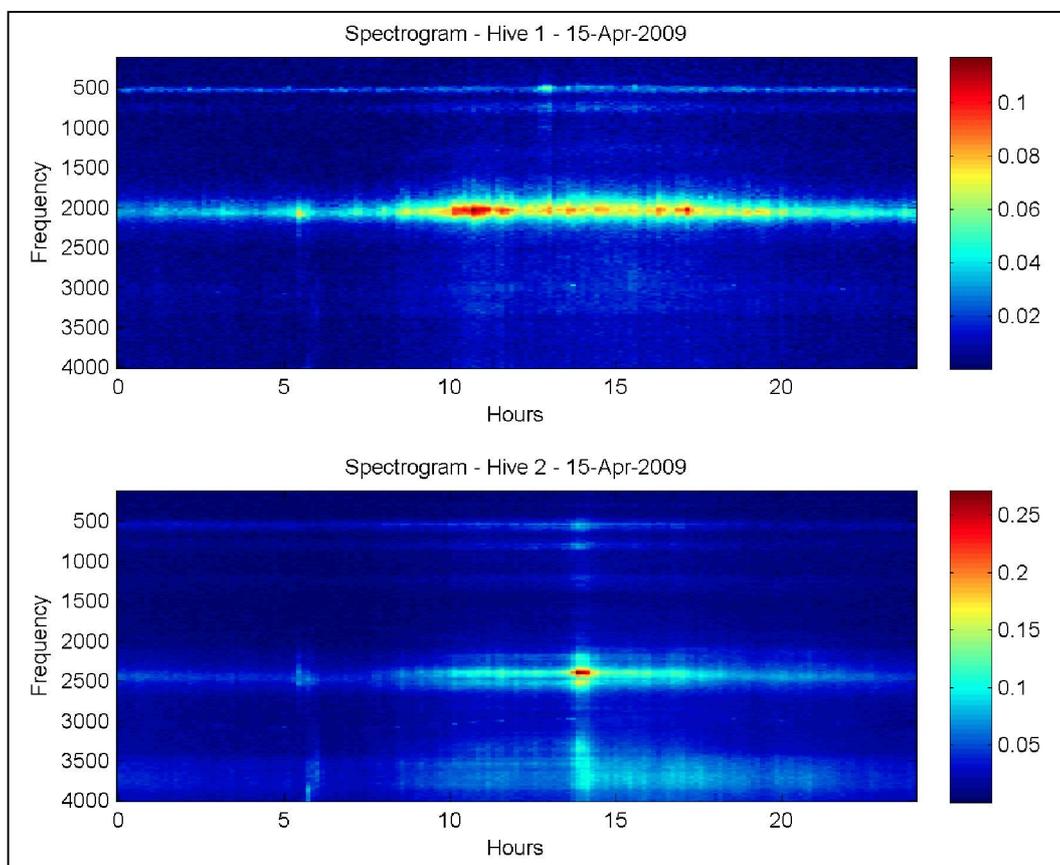
3

4 **Figure 8. colour-coded time course of the third order score (hive 1).** A clear peak in
5 amplitude is seen early in the morning, from the 10th of March onwards, which follows
6 very well the timings of the sun rise, which is displayed as a white line. The peak lasts a
7 few minutes and is also followed by a return to normality. The first day on the
8 horizontal axis corresponds to the 3rd of November 2008.

9

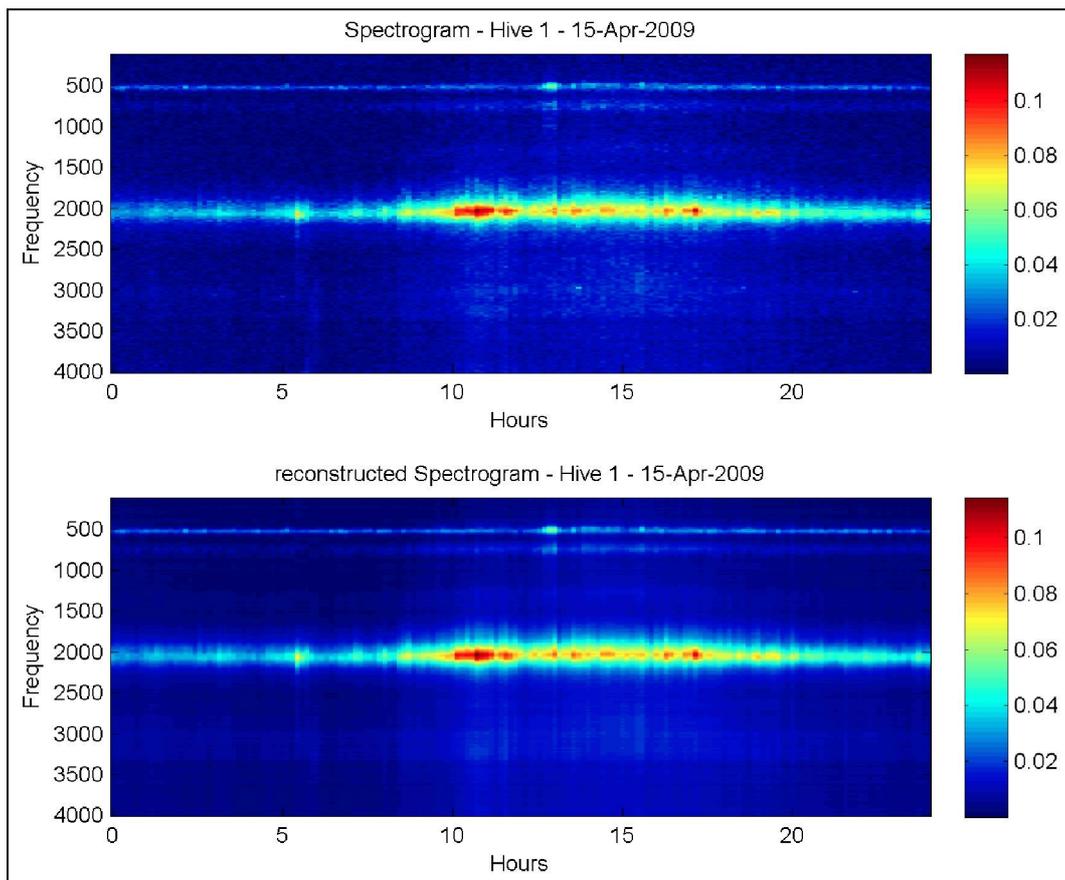
1 FIGURES

2 Figure 1



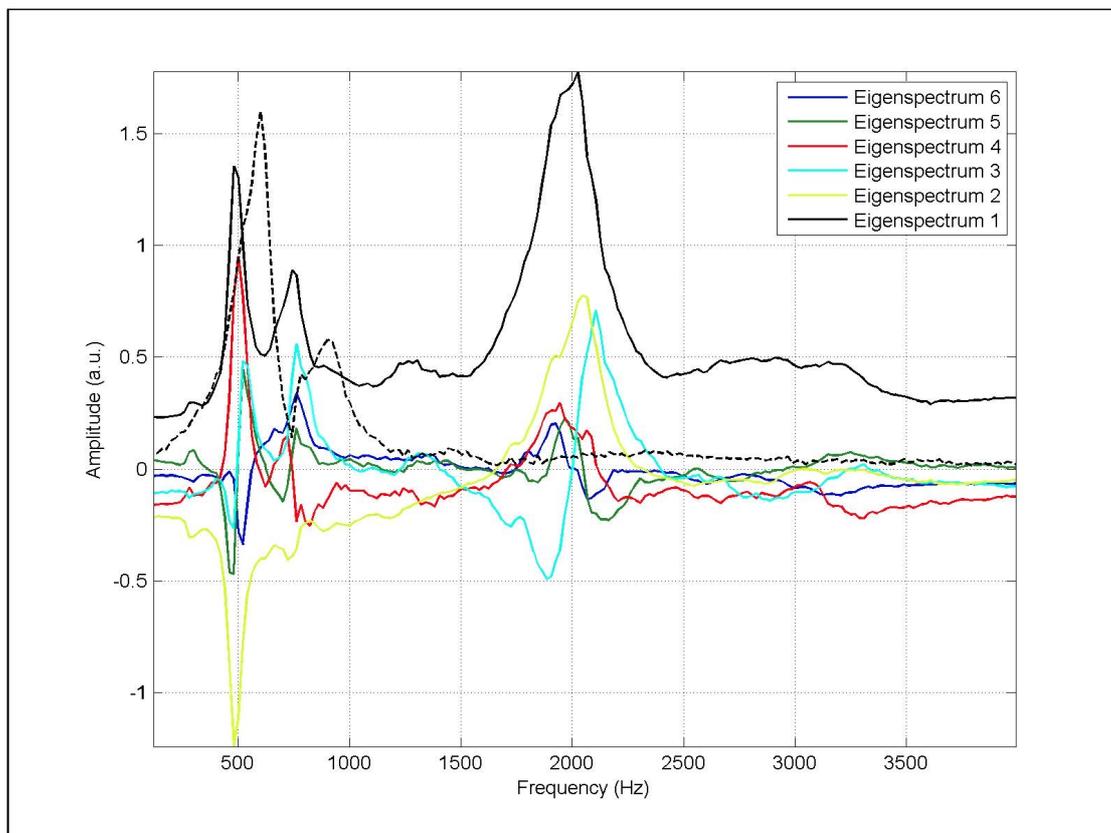
3

1 Figure 2

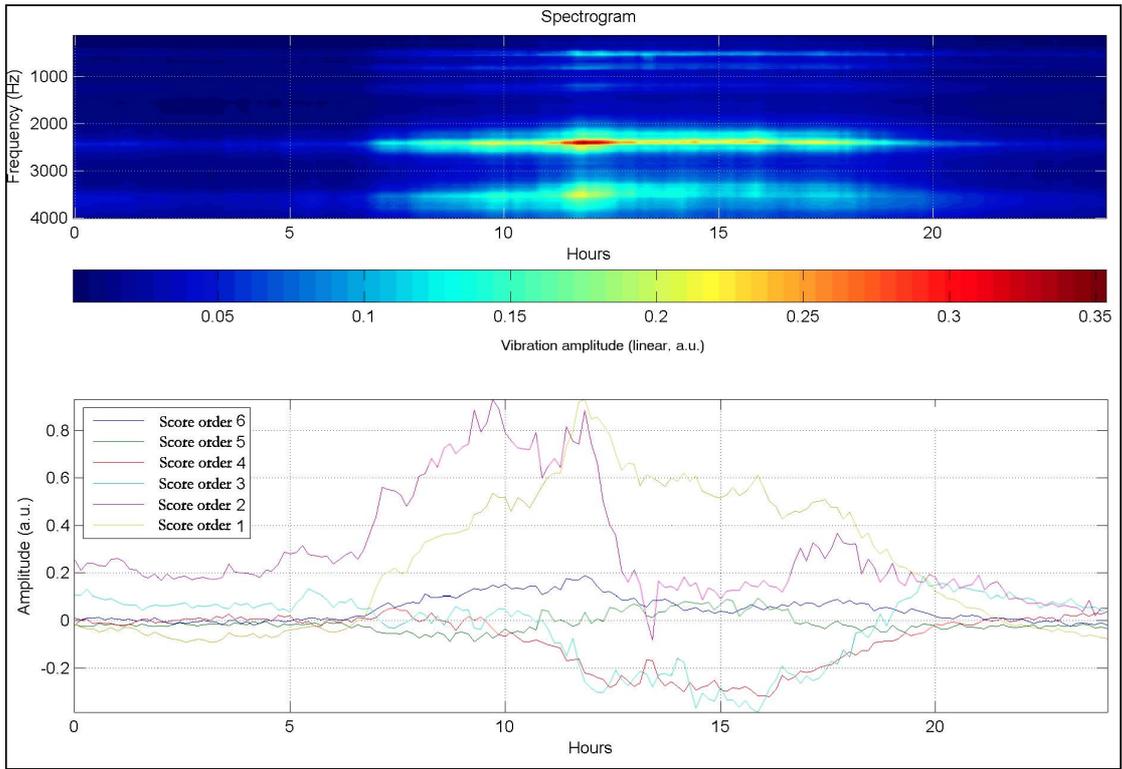


2

1 Figure 3

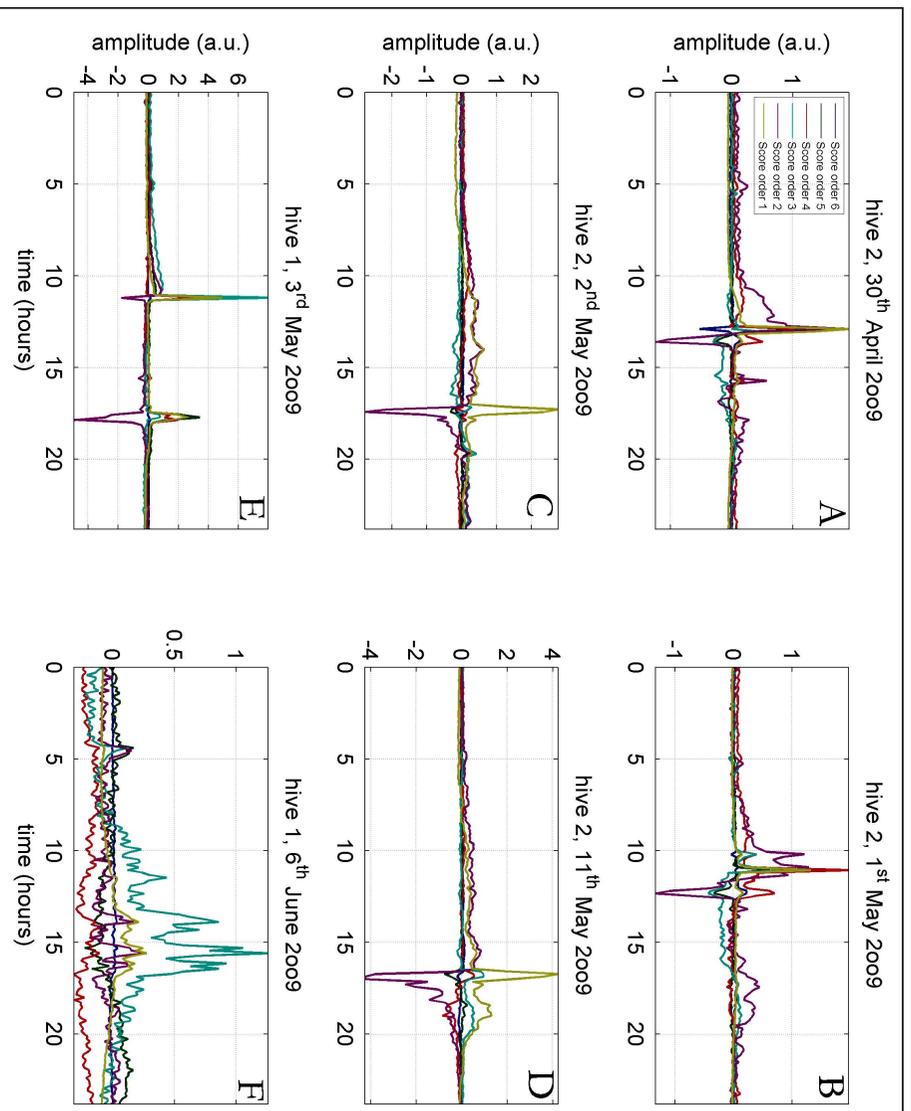


1 Figure 4



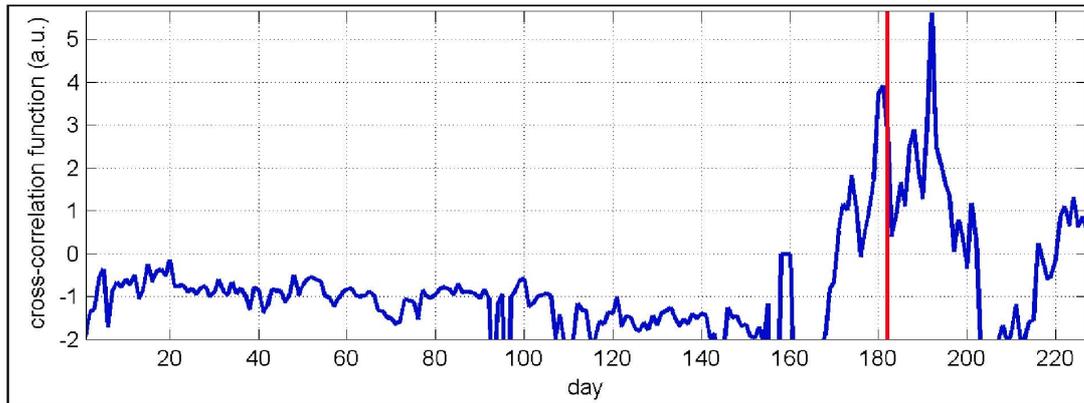
2

1 Figure 5



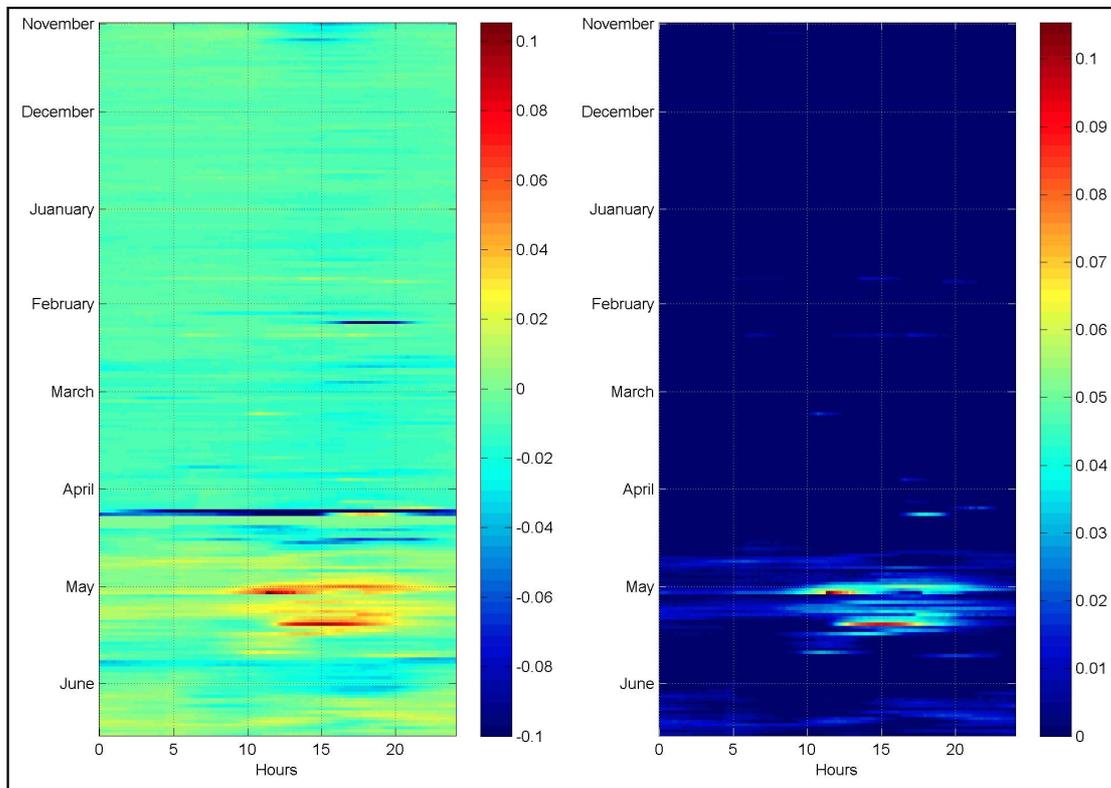
2

1 Figure 6



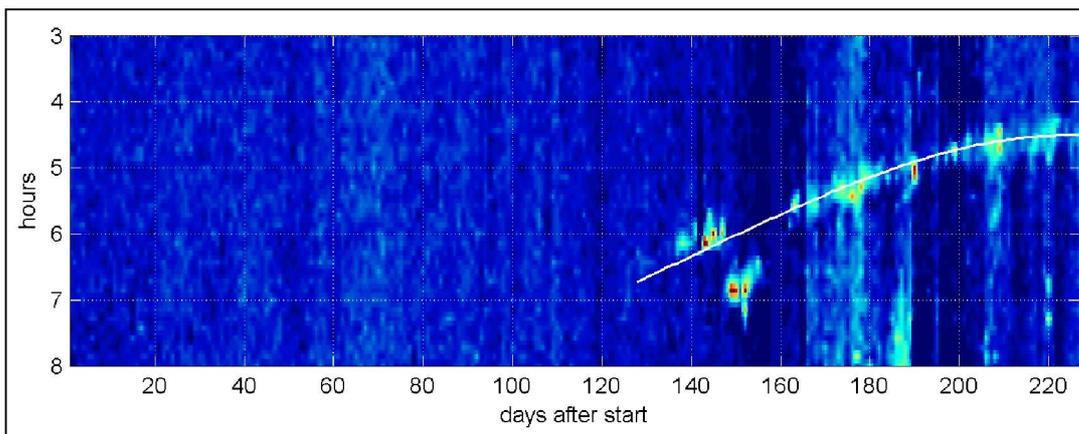
2

3 Figure 7



4

1 Figure 8



2