1 VALIDATION OF OPEN-PATH DUAL-COMB SPECTROSCOPY AGAINST AN O2 2 BACKGROUND

- 3 NATHAN A. MALARICH,^{1,3} BRIAN R. WASHBURN,¹ KEVIN C. COSSEL,¹
- 4 GRIFFIN J. MEAD,¹ FABRIZIO R. GIORGETTA,^{1,2} DANIEL I. HERMAN,^{1,2}
- 5 NATHAN R. NEWBURY,¹ AND IAN CODDINGTON^{1,4}
- 6 ¹NIST Spectrum Technology and Research Division, Boulder, CO 80305, USA
- 7 ²Department of Physics, University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, CO 80309, USA
- 8 ³nathan.malarich@nist.gov
- 9 ⁴ian.coddington@nist.gov

10 Abstract: Dual-comb spectroscopy measures greenhouse gas concentrations over kilometers 11 of open air with high precision. However, the accuracy of these outdoor spectra is challenging 12 to disentangle from the absorption model and the fluctuating, heterogenous concentrations over 13 these paths. Relative to greenhouse gases, O₂ concentrations are well-known and evenly mixed 14 throughout the atmosphere. Assuming a constant O_2 background, we can use O_2 concentration 15 measurements to evaluate the consistency of open-path dual-comb spectroscopy with 16 laboratory-derived absorption models. To this end, we construct a dual-comb spectrometer 17 spanning 1240 nm to 1700 nm, which measures O₂ absorption features in addition to CO₂ and 18 CH₄. O₂ concentration measurements across a 560 m round-trip outdoor path reach 0.1% 19 precision in 10 minutes. Over seven days of shifting meteorology and spectrometer conditions, 20 the measured O_2 has -0.07% mean bias, and 90% of the measurements are within 0.4% of the 21 expected hemisphere-average concentration. The excursions of up to 0.4% seem to track 22 outdoor temperature and humidity, suggesting that accuracy may be limited by the O_2 23 absorption model or by water interference. This simultaneous O₂, CO₂, and CH₄ spectrometer 24 will be useful for measuring accurate CO₂ mole fractions over vertical or many-kilometer open-25 air paths, where the air density varies.

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27 1. Introduction

28 Dual-comb spectroscopy (DCS) is an emerging technique for open-path greenhouse-gas 29 monitoring. These instruments can be operated with a negligible instrument line shape, broad 30 spectral bandwidth, high spectral resolution and near perfect frequency axis, enabling high-31 precision measurements of path concentrations. Open-path DCS has shown CO₂ precisions 32 better than 0.2% over 2 km in 30 seconds [1], making DCS well-matched to the challenging 33 requirements of greenhouse gas measurements [2]. In principle, open-path DCS should be 34 capable of not just precision but also retrieving expected concentrations, which would allow 35 measurements taken across the world and over successive years to be readily intercompared. 36 Additionally, an accurate DCS could be used to calibrate other open path instruments or even 37 satellite measurements in a manner similar to the Total Carbon Column Observing Network 38 (TCCON) [3].

39 In earlier work, outdoor DCS concentration measurements have agreed to 0.3% between 40 adjacent systems, but have deviated ~1% from nearby laboratory calibrated point 41 measurements [1]. There are three possible causes for this deviation. First, the DCS instrument 42 might produce some unidentified, systematic bias in its recorded spectrum. Even if the DCS 43 spectrum is not distorted, the molecular absorption model (e.g. HITRAN [4]) used to fit 44 concentration from the DCS spectrum can have its own error. Lastly, there is a great deal of 45 atmospheric variability in greenhouse gas concentrations, so an open-path sensor measuring a 46 kilometer path may not see the same path-averaged concentration as a nearby point sensor. This

47 atmospheric variability in CH₄ and CO₂ enables instruments to detect emissions [5,6], but
48 makes instrument biases challenging to diagnose.

49 It is possible to evaluate the accuracy of a DCS system using cell measurements, however 50 this also has some drawbacks. The maximum pathlength possible in a cell is short compared to 51 open paths and often forces one to work at mole fractions that are highly inconsistent with the 52 outdoor environment. Additionally, it is difficult to mimic the rapidly varying return power 53 seen on an open path (a possible driver of detection non-linearity and distortion) or the 54 fluctuations of water and other interfering species. Lastly, a multi-pass cell will likely 55 experience a different etalon realization than an open-path measurement. While cell based 56 validation offers its own benefits in terms of being able to control gas parameters, we want to 57 test these potential pitfalls unique to outdoor DCS measurements in the native measurement 58 environment as well.

59 Fortunately, there is an ideal molecule to use to validate open-path DCS measurements: O_2 . 60 Unlike other greenhouse gases, O_2 concentrations are consistent to 0.005% throughout the hemisphere, and have remained constant to 0.06% over the past 30 years [7,8]. While local 61 62 combustion and biosphere processes will exchange O_2 molecules for CO_2 (or vice versa), the 63 fractional change in O_2 will be much smaller than to CO_2 due to a 500x higher background 64 concentration. Additionally, considerable effort has been put into developing high-resolution 65 O_2 absorption models to support satellite remote sensing, and the latest line parameters are 66 believed to be accurate to within 0.2% [9]. Here, we leverage these advantages of O_2 to validate 67 open-path DCS concentration retrievals in a cross-platform comparison against a laboratory-68 derived absorption model, using the O₂ band at 1270 nm.

69 In addition to DCS verification, O2 measurements can improve open-path concentration 70 accuracies for other greenhouse gases including CO₂. Extracting CO₂ concentration (in µmol 71 CO₂ / mol dry air) from open-path spectroscopy requires knowledge of the air density 72 throughout the path. Traditional open-path DCS determines air mass, or path-integrated air 73 density, from the ideal gas law and a weather station [1]. An alternative is to simultaneously 74 measure path-integrated O_2 absorption and calibrate the air-mass to the known O_2 75 concentration, as is often done in both satellite [10-14] and solar-based ground 76 measurements [3,15]. Because O₂ concentrations are known and well-mixed in the atmosphere, 77 the ratio of O_2 to CO_2 or CH_4 can be used to remove errors associated with imperfect air mass 78 knowledge, provided the O₂ measurement is unbiased.

79 2. DCS system setup

80 2.1 Producing dual-comb spectra in the 1270 nm O₂ band





86 O₂ absorbs near-infrared light in two wavelength regions commonly used for remote sensing,
87 which are both shown in Fig. 1. Most satellite spectrometers use the A-band near 760 nm for

88 air-mass correction [10–13]. A second band, the $a^{1}\Delta_{g}$ band near 1270 nm, is more commonly 89 used for ground-based Fourier Transform Spectrometers [3,15] as well as upcoming satellite 90 missions [16,17].

91 This 1270 nm absorption band has several advantages over the 760 nm band for dual-comb 92 ground-based measurements and CO₂/CH₄ air mass corrections. First, the 1270 nm band is only 93 \sim 3x stronger than the 1600 nm CO₂/CH₄ band, whereas most of the 760 nm absorption features 94 would fully attenuate dual-comb light over outdoor pathlengths as short as 500 m (Fig. 1). 95 Second, the 1270 nm wavelengths are eye-safe at higher intensities than 760 nm, allowing more 96 laser power and thus higher measurement precision. Finally, the same InGaAs photodetector 97 can record the 1270 nm band in addition to the 1600 nm CO₂/CH₄ band, whereas the 760 nm 98 band would require an additional silicon photodetector.

99To generate phase-locked comb light in the 1270 nm O_2 band, we use an all-fiber setup100shown in Fig. 2(a). Erbium-doped fiber oscillators operating at a 200 MHz pulse-repetition101frequency (Fig. 2) provide a narrowband 1565 nm spectrum which is then split into two102branches. The first branch performs the two phase locks [18] which provide the coherence103across the spectrum which is required for accurate spectroscopy.



Fig 2. (a) All-fiber optical setup for producing spectrum in (b) for measurement of O_2 , CO_2 , and CH_4 features. EDFA: erbium-doped fiber amplifier, HNLF: highly nonlinear fiber, WDM: Wavelength Division Multiplexers, black lines: PM 1550 fiber, dashed black lines: PM980 fiber; yellow lines: SM1550 fiber. (b) DCS spectrum from outdoor measurement (160-minute average). The bottommost x-axis indicates the radio frequencies in the DCS heterodyne signal for the corresponding optical frequencies and wavelengths shown in the upper axes. Heterodyne frequencies exist at multiple wavenumbers due to the ambiguity in folding to one Nyquist window. Dither and DC signal below 1 MHz removed for clarity.

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113 The second branch generates the light for spectroscopy using highly nonlinear fiber 114 (HNLF). Unfortunately, many HNLF spectral broadening approaches produce negligible light 115 in the 1270 nm O₂ band. Our approach to generating milliwatt powers at 1270 nm was to seed 116 a long section of HNLF with a ~0.5 nJ pulse. To obtain this seed, we amplify the mode-locked 117 erbium oscillator pulse in an erbium-doped fiber amplifier (EDFA), compress it to ~ 100 fs in \sim 70 cm of PM1550 fiber, and inject it into a 60 cm length of low anomalous group velocity 118 dispersion (GVD) HNLF (D = +2.2 ps/nm/km). This approach requires lower amplification-119 120 the EDFA uses only 1 pump diode—as the dispersive wave blue-shifts below 1270 nm at higher 121 pulse powers due to intra-pulse Raman scattering [19]. Each HNLF module produces 3 mW of 122 comb light at 1270 nm and 5 mW at 1600 nm, which is less than the ~ 10 mW launch powers 123 for typical open-path DCS instruments but adequate for outdoor spectroscopy.

124 After the HNLF, additional fiber components (Fig. 2(a), right) filter the spectroscopy light 125 around the 1270 nm and 1600 nm bands and differentially chirp the combs before combining. 126 The differential chirp effectively spreads out the interferogram power in time, allowing the 127 receiver to maintain linear operation over a wider range of optical powers and thus avoid 128 spectrum inaccuracies [20]. To filter and chirp the supercontinuum, first a 1570 nm fiber WDM 129 separates the 1600 nm and 1270 nm light for each comb. The 1600 nm light from each comb is then chirped in PM1550 fiber, but the 1270 nm is inconveniently close to the zero-dispersion 130 131 point of PM1550 fiber and requires a different approach. To apply the differential chirp at 1270 132 nm, we rely on the waveguide dispersion of PM980 fiber, which has an overall GVD magnitude 133 of $\beta_2 \sim 15 \text{ ps}^2/\text{km}$ at 1270 nm. A 2 m section of differential PANDA PM980 fiber [43] thus 134 reduces the height of the 1270 nm interferogram by a factor of four. To avoid cross-phase modulation [21] after the combs are combined, we further add a common 3 m of PM980 chirp 135 136 fiber to the path of each comb. After the chirp fibers, an attenuator in the higher-power 1600 137 nm fiber branch balances the power in the two spectral bands before we recombine the bands 138 on the 1400 nm WDM. The final filtered spectrum out of this Fig. 2(a) subsystem has no 139 unwanted comb light between 1400 nm and 1570 nm, and 3 mW each in the 1270 nm and 1600 140 nm spectral regions.

We must phase lock the combs at a condition where all of the optical frequencies correspond to a unique RF heterodyne frequency, so that the 1270 nm and 1600 nm absorption bands can be recorded on a common detector. For phase locking, we lock a tooth of each frequency comb with the same +27 MHz offset to a RIO Orion 1560 nm reference laser [43], and set the repetition rates of the two combs at an offset of 208.8 Hz. This locking scheme maps the reference laser to 0 Hz and results in different radio frequencies for the 1270 nm and 1600 nm bands (as shown in Fig. 2(b), MHz axis).

148The time base for the frequency combs was provided by a commercial oven-controlled149quartz oscillator, which was low drift but had a $\sim 3x10^{-7}$ bias. The frequency offset caused by150this bias was determined by fitting one spectrum to known molecular features and then applying151this shift to subsequent data.

152 2.2 Outdoor measurement of O₂

We launch the combined and filtered combs on a horizontal, two-way outdoor path between a 154 10-cm aperture transmit/receive telescope (T_x/R_x) and 12.5-cm diameter hollow corner-cube 155 retroreflector (Fig. 3). A gimbal controls the telescope pointing to the retro. A single 156 photodetector collects the 1270 nm and 1600 nm return light and sends the heterodyne signal 157 to a data acquisition (DAQ) device.



Fig 3. Outdoor measurement setup for simultaneous O₂, CO₂, CH₄ and H₂O concentrations. Measurement over horizontal 560 m round-trip path between balconies on NIST Boulder campus (image credit: Google Earth). Yellow lines indicate optical fiber, thick red line indicates freespace laser, and black arrows indicate radio-frequency (RF) cables. Larger dashed boxes surround subsystems further detailed in Figs. 2,4. DAQ: data acquisition system.

Fig. 3 includes three subsystems to ensure the 1270 nm spectrum is free of instrument
distortions. The launch power servo between the fiber circuit and telescope avoids
photodetector saturation. The DAQ with real-time phase-correction compensates for
frequency-comb phase noise. The RF dither circuit surpasses digitization error on the DAQ.
Next, we describe each of these subsystems in detail.

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170 2.2.1 Power servo

Atmospheric turbulence moves and distorts the free-space laser beam, causing fluctuations in the optical power received on the photodetector [22]. These fluctuations can be particularly severe under sunny or windy turbulent conditions, and the brief bursts of maximum received power can exceed the requirements for linear photodetector operation [23]. To reduce these fluctuations in received power, a servo adjusts the launch power.

This power-servo consists of a closed-loop microcontroller and a variable optical attenuator that effectively clamps the maximum power on the detector. The fluctuations in transmitted power imprint on the DC photodetector voltage, read by the microcontroller. The microcontroller operates a fixed-gain feedback loop, adjusting the attenuation voltage of the variable fiber optical attenuator to stabilize this DC photodetector voltage at the prescribed setpoint. The 1 kHz bandwidth of the feedback loop is comparable or faster than the turbulence induced power variations observed over this path.

183 This power-servo acts equally on both the 1270 nm and 1600 nm spectral bands. The other 184 manually operated attenuator in Fig. 2(a) controls the power in the 1600 nm band without any 185 feedback. In Section 3.4 we change settings for each attenuator to test dependence of the 186 concentration retrievals on optical power.

187 2.2.2 DAQ with real-time phase correction

188 In addition to moderate optical powers, accurate spectroscopy requires interferogram phase 189 noise well below 1 radian [24]. The timing jitter of our oscillators causes the comb tooth phase 190 noise to increase linearly with frequency offset from the carrier [25]. Since the CO_2/CH_4 191 absorption bands lie closer to the 1560 nm carrier, the phase-noise criterion is easier to meet 192 for CO_2/CH_4 spectroscopy than for O_2 spectroscopy. In these combs, the residual phase noise 193 on the self-referenced lock of carrier-envelope offset frequency is 4.5 radians (integrated from 194 1 Hz to 5 MHz), and the residual phase noise in the lock to the cw-laser at 1560 nm is ~ 0.2 rad, 195 suggesting that the phase noise in the O_2 band should be ~1.8 radians. To remove this residual 196 carrier-envelope offset phase noise from the recorded spectra, the FPGA-based DAQ records 197 the residual phase noise from each comb phase lock and applies a point-by-point digital phase-198 correction described in [26], which is an adaptation of the work in [20,27] for our present comblocking scheme. As is typically done, we also apply an interferogram-to-interferogram phase 199 200 correction to remove slow, out-of-loop drifts. We average interferograms for 96 seconds before 201 writing to disk. For the phase correction, we split the two spectral bands onto different DAQ channels (Fig. 4) allowing us to apply separate phase corrections to compensate for the 202 203 independent fiber paths in each branch for the two spectral bands.



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Fig 4. RF circuit between photodetector and DAQ allows power measurement and undistorted signal digitization. The circuit splits the heterodyne signal into O_2 and CO_2/CH_4 components. We dither both bands with a 1 MHz sinewave before recording on separate analog-to-digital converters (ADC). S/C is 50/50 splitter, which operates either as splitter or coupler.

209 2.2.3 Dither circuit

Interferograms are recorded on a 14 bit, 200 MS/s analog-to-digital converter (ADC). While
such ADCs can be quite linear over their full voltage range, transitions between different
subsections of the ADC circuit can lead to nonlinear behavior at the least-significant-bit (LSB)
range. As the free induction decay portion of an interferogram typically spans only a couple

LSBs, this nonlinear behavior can lead to a bias in concentration [28]. We mitigate this ADC impact by adding a 1 MHz sinewave dither to the interferogram prior to digitizing (shown in Fig. 4) [29]. This dither amplitude spans 2000 LSBs, ensuring that the ADC samples the free induction decay over a large bit range. The dither frequency is asynchronous with the interferogram frame rate, allowing it to be suppressed during averaging of successive interferograms.

220 3. O₂ concentration retrievals

221 To test this $O_2/CO_2/CH_4$ spectrometer, we measure a short (560 m round-trip) horizontal path 222 (Fig. 3) where a weather station positioned 10 m above the telescope records the air density. 223 We first characterize the dry O_2 fit of a characteristic dataset. Then in Section 3.5 we evaluate 224 the consistency of this O₂ concentration retrieval under a variety of laser and weather 225 conditions. This work emphasizes O₂ rather than the CO₂ and CH₄ fits, because O₂ has the most 226 stable concentrations. However, to apply the O_2 measurement for an air-mass correction, we must recover expected O₂ concentrations in this setup which simultaneously measures these 227 228 other species.

229 3.1 Expected O₂ concentration

Inherent in this work is the assumption that our local dry O₂ mole fractions match the global
mean to better than the precision of our measurement. This assumption is validated by the
Scripps network which has observed global O₂ levels for decades. During our May 2022
measurements, Scripps had six active flask locations throughout the northern hemisphere;
across this urban and rural spanning network the total spread in monthly dry O₂ mole fractions
from all sites ranged from 0.20933-0.20934, a 0.005% variation [8].

236 An additional driver of O₂ uncertainty at our location is temporal fluctuations due to local 237 sources and sinks from combustion and biogenic exchange. These fluctuations are difficult to 238 measure directly, but their magnitude can be estimated from local CO₂ measurements and a theoretical O₂/CO₂ exchange ratio [30]. Previous, 5 minute resolution, paramagnetic 239 240 measurements at the La Jolla site have shown O₂ concentrations are strongly anticorrelated with 241 local CO₂ concentrations. For combustion the expected O₂: CO₂ exchange ratio is $-1.4 O_2$: 1 CO₂ [31]. The La Jolla site actually sees a slightly lower ratio, indicating that 1.4:1 is a 242 243 conservative estimate of O₂ variability. At our site, a collocated cavity ring-down spectrometer 244 (CRDS) instrument measured a maximum CO2 variation of 50 µmol/mol during our measurement periods, corresponding to a 50e-6 * 1.4 / 0.20934 * 100% = 0.033% uncertainty 245 246 in O_2 concentration. Taking this temporal variation together with the global variation, we 247 assume an uncertainty of 0.035% on the assumed dry O_2 mole fraction throughout the month of DCS measurements. This variation is comfortably below our 0.1% instrument precision. 248

249 3.2 Spectral fitting

250 The DCS spectrum at 1270 nm (Fig. 2(b)) contains many O_2 absorption features, but also water 251 vapor features and structure from the initial laser intensity spectrum. To extract accurate O₂ 252 concentrations from this spectrum, we fit with a time-domain technique which separates the 253 absorption signature from the spectral fluctuations in laser background intensity [32]. This 254 technique fits the modified free induction decay (mFID) signal in Fig. 5(a), which is the inverse-255 Fourier transform of the logarithm of the O_2 and H_2O portion of the intensity spectrum (7790) 256 cm⁻¹-7960 cm⁻¹). The laser intensity background and etalons occupy only a few points of this 257 mFID signal, so the least-squares algorithm applies zero weights to those high-residual regions 258 (Fig. 5(a) shaded regions) and instead fits concentration over the majority of the mFID signal 259 where there is negligible laser-intensity structure. This approach is essentially a spectral fit with 260 a high-pass filter to ignore slowly-varying structure on the comb spectrum.



Fig 5. Fitting the 1270 nm O_2 band of a 160 minute time-averaged spectrum. (a) Time-domain fit result using mFID technique. Purple: best-fit model from $O_2 + H_2O$. Black: fit residual. Inset shows high-amplitude residual at early times due to laser intensity background. High-pass fit weighting function is zero in green-shaded regions. (b) Frequency-domain visualization of time-domain fit using β -qSDNGP+LM O_2 absorption model [9], and (c) Grey: high-pass weighted absorbance residual. Black: same residual apodized from 200 MHz to 1.6 GHz resolution.

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268 The fits naturally return a path integrated number density (molecules/cm²) for each 269 observed species of molecule, as well as a path averaged temperature and pressure. However, 270 a dry air mole fraction (mol O₂/mol air) is the quantity of interest for atmospheric measurements 271 and, equally importantly, O_2 dry air mole fraction is the atmospherically stable quantity that we 272 hope to evaluate in this work. Conversion to mole fraction is straightforward through the ideal 273 gas law, but requires additional knowledge of path length (measured to 0.05% precision with a laser ranger) to convert to path-averaged number density (molecules/cm³), as well as the path 274 275 averaged temperature and pressure to determine the air number density. It is a strength of this 276 approach that, between the resolution and bandwidth of the DCS and the quality of the O_2 absorption model, we can directly recover high quality temperature and pressure from the 277 278 spectral fits, allowing us to retrieve a mole fraction almost entirely from a single self-consistent 279 DCS measurement.

280 Our path-average fitting approach does assume constant pressure and temperature across 281 the laser path. Partly this is justified by the fact that we avoid localized heating by having all 282 but a few meters of the path be at least 5 m above any surface, but there could be inhomogeneity. 283 The impact of an inhomogeneous path can be modeled and is small. Cross-comparison of 284 weather stations within 1 km of the site shows that local temperatures may vary by up to 4 K. 285 Local pressures are predictably more uniform, varying by up to 0.6 hPa. To quantify the effect 286 of inhomogeneity we simulate a continuous 8 K gradient path and fit to a constant temperature. 287 The model gives a 0.01% error in fit concentration and <0.01% error in the retrieved mean 288 temperature. Similar analysis shows a negligible effect for a 0.6 hPa pressure gradient.

Finally, we use the retrieved O₂ and H₂O mole fractions ($\chi_{O_2,fit}, \chi_{H_2O,fit}$) to obtain the dry O₂ mole fraction according to Eq. 1:

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$$\chi_{O_2,dry} = \frac{\chi_{O_2,fit}}{1 - \chi_{H_2O,fit}}$$

292 Several observations suggest high fit quality. First, the frequency-domain spectrum (Fig. 293 5(b)) shows many high-SNR H₂O and O₂ features. Also, the frequency-domain residual of Fig. 294 5(c) (defined as Fourier transform of the product of the time-domain fit residual and weight 295 function) shows that 95 out of the 99 O₂ modeled absorption features have a residual below 296 0.0005 absorbance. Finally, the mFID fit is only weakly sensitive to the size of the zero-weight 297 region, and doubling this region (from 27 ps to 60 ps) changes the O₂ concentration by a factor 298 of just 1.0005.

The residuals are more likely to be from H₂O and O₂ absorption model error than any other species. HDO is the only secondary isotopologue HITRAN predicts to produce absorption near our noise floor in this spectral region, and we include it in the fit, constraining its mole fraction to be equal to H₂O. CO₂ and CH₄ have a maximum 1e-5 absorption in this region, far below the noise floor and omitted from this spectral model. Aerosol effects on our short path are both
 weak and impart a smoothly-varying structure on the spectrum, which would be removed by
 the high-pass weighting filter.

306 3.3 O₂ absorption model

307 The DCS concentration measurement depends directly upon the molecular absorption model 308 used to fit the spectrum. Absorption models include both an intensity and several lineshape 309 parameters for each absorption feature. A model with incorrect lineshape parameters will 310 extract incorrect areas and produce fit residual structure, while a model with an incorrect band 311 strength will produce a constant concentration offset. We used the empirical O_2 line-by-line 312 absorption model from [9] based on room-temperature, zero-humidity cavity ring-down 313 measurements at a range of pressures with a stated uncertainty of 0.16%. This model includes 314 several non-Voigt lineshape parameters to improve the pressure-dependence accuracy of the 315 absorption model. Specifically, it is a beta quadratic speed-dependent Nelkin-Ghatak profile with line-mixing (β -qSDNGP+LM), which includes two line-narrowing parameters and an 316 asymmetry parameter. To this room-temperature model, we add the linewidth temperature-317 318 exponents from HITRAN2020 [4], which were derived from atmospheric-column FTIR 319 data [33].

320 We input this line-by-line model into the HITRAN Application Programming 321 Interface [34] to calculate a lookup table of absorption spectra at 40 hPa pressure, 10 K 322 temperature, and 0.04 O_2 mole fraction resolution. Then the fit uses rectangular interpolation 323 to fit the measured spectrum with this pre-computed grid. This lookup table method reduces 324 the time to fit each spectrum to under 1 second, rather than recalculating the non-Voigt 325 absorption model each iteration of a slower nonlinear minimization routine. The tradeoff for 326 this speed a maximum interpolation error (calculated at midpoint of grid) of 0.045% imposed 327 on the retrieved mole fraction at this gridding resolution.

Using this β-qSDNGP+LM absorption model, the fit of the 160-minute data set matches the
expected mole fraction to the stated 0.16% uncertainty in line intensity (Table 1). Furthermore,
whereas previous open-path DCS studies have fixed pressure to a barometer measurement [1],
we fit a pressure from the spectral linewidths that matches the barometer within the estimated
0.05% uncertainty in line broadening parameters [9]. Uncertainties of 0.8 K and 0.1 hPa in the
expected path-average conditions are maximum discrepancies between two weather stations 1
km apart throughout the time period.

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Table 1. Fit results to Fig. 2(b) spectrum using different absorption models. Expected T and P data comes from weather station and expected χ_{O_2} from Scripps O₂ program [8].

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	Expected	HITRAN2020	% diff	β -qSDNGP+LM [9]	% diff
	_	Voigt [4]			
Dry χ_{O_2}	0.20934(7)	0.20682	-1.20	0.20967	0.16
T (K)	287.7(8)	284.0	1.27	287.6	0.02
P (hPa)	826.3(1)	819.7	-0.80	826.1	-0.04

For comparison, we also fit this spectrum with the HITRAN2020 Voigt model, which is a combination of the Voigt lineshapes from NIST Gaithersburg [9] and Universite Grenoble Alpes [35,36]. The resulting fit, shown in Table 1, changes the O₂ mole fraction by 1.2% relative to the β-qSDNGP+LM model and gives a worse estimate of all three parameters. A study of many absorption line models with TCCON data also found that the β-qSDNGP+LM model from [9] gave the lowest-residual spectral fits [37].

343 3.4 Precision of O₂ measurement

The fitted O_2 mole fractions over a 2.5-hour acquisition period are shown in Fig. 6(a). The corresponding Allan deviation (Fig. 6(b)) shows that O_2 achieves a 0.1% relative precision in 10 minutes. Concentration precision is proportional to pathlength [38], so extending the pathlength should reduce the Allan deviation provided that the received optical power is the same, and the pathlength is not so long that the absorption features saturate. CO₂ and CH₄ had
lower relative precisions, due to the weaker absorption signature of these molecules. However,
the pathlength-normalized CH₄ precision of 3 µmol/mol*m at 900 s is comparable to previous
open-path fiber-comb results [1,39].



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Fig 6. (a) O_2 fit time-series with 96-second averaging. Solid trace is mean of the fitted mole fractions, dashed line is expected mole fraction from [8] with dotted lines at $\pm 0.16\%$ uncertainty. (b) Corresponding Allan deviation of fitted dry mole fractions for each species, expressed in relative percent. CO_2 and CH_4 fits are from simultaneous 1600 nm measurement. O_2 achieves 0.1% precision in 10 minutes.

The dry O_2 mole fraction is constant with time, and the known value is shown as a dashed line in Fig. 6(a). The dotted horizontal lines in Fig. 6(a) indicate a relative concentration uncertainty of 0.16% from the absorption model [9]. Half of the individual, 96-second O_2 measurements lie within this bound, as does the time-average of all 100 measurements (solid line). Average CO₂ and CH₄ concentrations matched the WMO-referenced point sensor to better than 0.5%, which is comparable to previous work [1], though spatial variability of these gases makes it difficult to compare too directly.

365 3.5. Consistency of O₂ measurement

To test whether this O₂ measurement remains stable over shifting conditions, we collected 13 hours of data spread throughout one month, changing both meteorological conditions and DCS instrument parameters. We consider 10-minute time-averages of these datasets to distinguish potential measurement bias from low measurement precision (as the Fig. 6(b) Allan deviation shows 0.1% precision at 10 minutes).



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Fig 7. (a) Dry-O₂ fit errors for 10-minute-averaged spectra (markers). Dotted lines separate each day of measurement. (b) Histogram of same O₂ fits. The data have a mean $\chi_{O_2} = 0.20913$ (-0.07%), and 90% of fits are within 0.4% of O₂ background (dashed line). Dashed-line is Gaussian distribution with same mean and variance as histogram.

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Table 2. Range of measurement conditions in Fig. 7 histogram. Top category is meteorology; bottom category is instrument parameters.

Parameter	Min	Max
T (K)	278	302
P (hPa)	824	833
H ₂ O (mmol/mol)	2	14
Dither amplitude on ADC (LSBs)	2600	5200
Power in O_2 band (μW)	27	100
Total power in $O_2 + CO_2$ bands (μW)	30	160

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The histogram of all the 10-minute-averaged data (Fig. 7(b)) has an average mole fraction bias of -0.07%, within the 0.16% uncertainty due to the absorption model line intensities. However, the O_2 error does not look like Gaussian noise, as the O_2 fit concentration drops by ~0.4% on 5/11 and returns to typical values on 5/13. Even with this time-varying behavior, 90% of the fits are within 0.4% of expected concentration. This level of agreement between the DCS, absorption model, and O_2 background is comparable to the agreement between the TCCON and OCO-2 network, which has a mean 0.1% offset and RMS 0.4% offset [40].

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Table 3. Summary of dry-O2 error budget, expressed as percent uncertainties in dry O2.

Source	% UC	Determination
O2 spatiotemporal variability	0.035	From global network [8] and local CO ₂ CRDS
Pathlength	0.05	Laser ranger precision
Path nonuniformity	0.01	Simulate 8 K, 0.6 hPa variation across laser path
Laser baseline masking	0.05	Change weight function gate time in fit [32]
Lookup table discretization	0.045	Interpolation from P, T, XO2 grid of simulated spectra
Absorption model intensities	0.16	From [9]
Quadrature sum	0.18	

388 This 0.4% variation exceeds the aggregate uncertainty from the sources we have already 389 discussed throughout Section 3, summarized in Table 3. It is an order of magnitude larger than 390 the atmospheric variability in O_2 concentration, larger than the uncertainties in the fitting 391 approach and the uncertainty in the room-temperature absorption model.

392 3.6. Possible explanations for the residual error and future directions

393 To diagnose the possible causes of this 0.4% deviation in the O₂ data, we consider the 394 conditions that vary across the measurement (Table 2). The meteorology conditions (Table 2, top) alter the number density of O_2 measured by the DCS spectrum. As the fit relies on the 395 quality of the absorption model to disentangle dry O₂ mole fraction from these other variations 396 397 in O2 number density, the meteorological variation might interact with absorption model error 398 to produce error in the O_2 fits. The second category of independent variables are instrument 399 variables (Table 2, bottom), which may act through instrument nonlinearities to distort the DCS 400 spectrum. While this time-varying bias could be an undiagnosed sporadic instrument issue, a 401 multi-variate analysis of O_2 error with respect to all the parameters in Table 2 point to a possible 402 absorption model error.

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Fig 8. Time-varying O_2 fit error (from Fig 7) correlates with meteorology, possibly indicating error in the absorption model. (a) O_2 fits (markers) colored by day of measurement. Grey trace: regression ($R^2 = 0.55$) with respect to measured temperature (b) and H₂O mole fraction (c). (d) Histogram of residual O_2 fits after subtracting correlation line in (a) has deviation 0.16%.

408 Of these independent variables in Table 2, temperature and H₂O mole fraction variations 409 track this time-varying O_2 error (Fig. 8). The low-biased O_2 data corresponds to a period of 410 high temperature, followed by a period of high H₂O mole fraction across the laser path. The 411 two-parameter regression reduces the standard deviation of the residual fit error to 0.16%. 412 giving a more Gaussian histogram (Fig. 8(d)) with close to the expected 0.1% deviation from 413 absorbance noise. This temperature and H₂O correlation was much stronger than error 414 correlations with pressure, photodetector power, or dither amplitude across the dataset. As the 415 dual-comb instrument was indoors, we would not expect any temperature-dependent instrument 416 effects to correlate with the outdoor temperature shown here. However, absorption model error 417 might be causing this correlation—while the empirical model was based on several pressures, 418 there are no laboratory measurements at different temperatures or at significant humidity [9].

Eq. 2 describes the empirical regression trace in Fig. 8(a), expressed in terms of deviation
 from the laboratory temperature and H₂O conditions in [9]:

$$O_2 \, error \, (\%) = 0.13 - 7.8 \, \frac{T - 296}{296} - 55 \, \chi_{H_2 O}$$
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422 To investigate a theoretical basis of this empirically-derived equation, we simulate spectra 423 with uncertainties in several absorption model parameters. The absorption model line 424 intensities have a 0.16% uncertainty, producing an O₂ error of up to 0.16% at dry, 296 K 425 conditions. This is larger than the 0.13% error in the empirical Eq. 2, so this first coefficient 426 has a plausible magnitude. Temperature-dependence of the O_2 error may stem from uncertainty 427 in the linewidth temperature-exponents, which are currently estimated from TCCON 428 atmospheric data as no temperature-varying laboratory data is available. A sensitivity study of 429 O₂ fit error due to a 7% bias in these temperature exponents (the change from HITRAN2016 to 430 HITRAN2020) predicted a coefficient of 5.3, close to the observed 7.8 in Eq. 2. Finally, H₂O-431 dependence of O₂ error may stem from H₂O-broadening of the O₂ features. No H₂O-broadening 432 laboratory data exists in this band, although a simulation using the best estimates of H_2O -433 broadening [41] suggests this coefficient could be 10, less than the observed 55. Of the three 434 regression coefficients in Eq. 2, only H₂O-dependence substantially exceeds the expected 435 sensitivity to uncertainty ranges in O_2 absorption model parameters. However, this remaining 436 H₂O-dependence could possibly stem from overlapping absorption between O₂ features and a 437 less-accurate model of H₂O features.

438 There is also the possibility that the 0.4% O₂ variations are coming from a different variable 439 that isn't recorded in Table 2. However, our investigations suggest that the T and H₂O dependence is plausible, and that improved absorption models can reduce the bias of future
measurements. Additional data taken during periods of high meteorological variability could
confirm this trend and allow construction of a calibrated absorption model. We hope to address
this with future measurement efforts.

444 4. Summary

445 Here we constructed a dual-comb spectrometer capable of simultaneously measuring O_2 446 concentrations, water vapor concentrations, atmospheric temperature and pressure based on 447 spectroscopy around 1270 nm. Measurements on a horizontal outdoor path achieved 0.1% 448 precision in 10 minutes, and 90% of these time-averaged measurements agree with the expected 449 dry-O2 mole fraction to within 0.4% without bias correction. While different open-path dual-450 comb spectrometers have shown relative agreement over a range of concentrations and multiple 451 molecules, this is the first validation of concentration retrievals with bias below 0.5%. The 452 quality of the O_2 absorption model enabled this degree of agreement without using a weather 453 station to provide temperature and pressure. Concentration retrievals with 0.4% accuracy are 454 comparable to state-of-the-art for open-path instruments. Furthermore, as the 0.4% deviations from the expected background correlated with weather changes across the laser path, 455 456 improvements in absorption models at the range of weather conditions has the potential to 457 improve this agreement.

458 In addition to measuring O_2 , the spectrometer simultaneously measured CO_2 and CH_4 at 459 1600 nm. Thus, this O_2 measurement eventually can correct the path-integrated air density of 460 CO_2 and CH_4 measurements. Correcting for airmass by calculating CO_2/O_2 or CH_4/O_2 ratios 461 will introduce a 0.4% uncertainty as demonstrated here. This air density correction could be 462 advantageous for longer outdoor measurements where a single weather station cannot reliably 463 provide the path-integrated air density.

464

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473 Data availability. Data underlying the results presented in this paper are available in Dataset 1, Ref. [42].

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