

1 **Revisiting the evolution of downhill thunderstorms over**
2 **Beijing: A new perspective from radar wind profiler mesonet**

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20 **Abstract**

21 Downhill thunderstorms frequently occur in Beijing during the rainy seasons, leading
22 to substantial precipitation. The accurate intensity prediction of these events remains a
23 challenge, partly attributed to insufficient observational studies that unveil the
24 thermodynamic and dynamic structures along the vertical direction. This study provides
25 a comprehensive methodology for identifying both enhanced and dissipated downhill
26 thunderstorms. In addition, a radar wind profiler (RWP) mesonet has been built in
27 Beijing to characterize the pre-storm environment downstream to the thunderstorms at
28 the mountain foot. This involves deriving vertical distributions of high-resolution
29 horizontal divergence and vertical motion from the horizontal wind profiles measured
30 by the RWP mesonet. A case study of enhanced downhill thunderstorm on 28
31 September 2018 is carried out for comparison with a dissipated downhill thunderstorm
32 on 23 June 2018, supporting the notion that a deep convergence layer detected by the
33 RWP mesonet, combined with the enhanced southerly flow, could favor the
34 intensification of thunderstorms. Statistical analysis based on radar reflectivity from
35 April to September 2018–2021 have shown that a total of 63 thunderstorm events tend
36 to be enhanced when entering the plain, accounting for about 66% of the total number
37 of downhill thunderstorm events. A critical region for intensified thunderstorms lies on
38 the downslope side of the mountains west to Beijing. The evolution of the downhill
39 storm is associated with the dynamic conditions over the plain compared to its initial
40 morphology. The existence of strong westerly winds and divergence in the middle of
41 troposphere, exert a critical influence on the enhancement of convection, while low-
42 level divergence more leads to the dissipation. The findings underscore the significant
43 role of RWP network in elucidating the evolution of downhill storm.

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Short Summary

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The prediction of downhill thunderstorm (DS) remains elusive. Here we propose a objective method to identify the DS, based on which enhance and dissipated DS are discriminated. A radar wind profiler (RWP) mesonet is used to derive divergence and vertical velocity. The mid-troposphere divergence and prevailing westerlies enhance the intensity of DS, whereas the low-level divergence is observed when the DS dissipates. The findings highlight the key role that RWP mesonet plays in the evolution of DS.

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91 **1. Introduction**

92 The complex evolution of convective systems crossing mountainous terrain
93 represents a substantial forecasting challenge. It has been previously reported that
94 downhill thunderstorms with intensive reflectivity and good organization are more
95 likely to successfully maintain or strengthen compared to isolated and small-scale
96 thunderstorms (Castro *et al.*, 1992). Various thermal factors that favor the development
97 of downhill thunderstorm have been identified, including higher instability and lower
98 convective inhibition (Letkewicz and Parker, 2010, 2011; Keighton *et al.*, 2007),
99 adequate water vapor accompanied by low-level jets (Tompkins, 2001; McCaul and
100 Cohen, 2004; Weckwerth *et al.*, 2014), and cool pool (Teng *et al.*, 2000; Jeevanjee and
101 Romps, 2015; Li *et al.*, 2017; Xiao *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, a few studies in the
102 literature have demonstrated the importance of the dynamic environment over the plain,
103 such as surface and low-tropospheric convergence for convection initiation (Frame and
104 Markowski, 2006; Miglietta and Rotunno, 2009; Wilson *et al.*, 2010), and strong
105 vertical wind shear (Parker *et al.*, 2007; Reeves and Lin, 2007; Xiao *et al.*, 2019).

106 The topography in Beijing is intricate, given its location at the foot of the Taihang
107 Mountains to the west and the Yan Mountains to the north, both of which have ridges
108 with elevations exceeding 1200 meters (Figure 1a). Wilson *et al.* (2007) found that
109 downhill thunderstorms, particularly those originating from the west, constituted 79%
110 of all thunderstorms in Beijing between 2003 and 2005, as determined through a
111 statistical analysis of thunderstorm datasets. The distinctive topography and the
112 frequent occurrence of downhill thunderstorm in Beijing afford us an excellent
113 opportunity to observe the inherent dynamic structures of downhill thunderstorms and
114 their pre-storm environments. This, in turn, allows for a more in-depth investigation
115 into the potential physical mechanisms underlying the formation of this severe weather
116 event. However, most of the previous studies are limited to the analysis of a single
117 downhill thunderstorm case (Chen *et al.*, 2017; Sun and Cheng, 2017; Kang *et al.*, 2019).
118 Besides, the investigation of pre-storm environment and evolution process of
119 thunderstorm are either based on the model simulation (Chen *et al.*, 2005; Xiao *et al.*,

120 2015; Li *et al.*, 2017) or reanalysis data (Wang *et al.*, 2019), largely owing to the dearth
121 of high-density continuous vertical profiling measurements of wind, temperature, and
122 humidity.

123 Furthermore, there exist no objective method that can be used to identify and track
124 the propagation of downhill thunderstorm in the literature. Therefore, more urgent
125 efforts are warranted to investigate the difficult-to-forecast storm type from a statistical
126 perspective of ground-based atmospheric profiling mesonet observations. A high-
127 density mesonet, consisting of six radar wind profilers (RWP) has been established in
128 the Beijing since 2018 (Figure 1b) to continuously observe three-dimensional wind
129 fields with high temporal and vertical resolution. This provides us with a valuable tool
130 to explore the atmospheric dynamic structures, such as areal averaged vorticity,
131 divergence, and vertical velocity, of the pre-storm environment for the downhill
132 thunderstorms by using the parameters derived from the RWP mesonet. The primary
133 goals of this study are twofold: (1) to develop an objective method to identify the event
134 of downhill thunderstorm and its evolution, mainly based on composite radar
135 reflectivity from weather radar; and (2) to explore the statistical patterns of downhill
136 thunderstorms and reveal the dynamical structures in the development of downhill
137 thunderstorms, aiming to attain a deeper understanding of the evolution processes of
138 these thunderstorms.

139 The next section describes the data and methodology, in which a novel objective
140 method is proposed to characterize the evolution of downhill thunderstorm. Section 3
141 presents a case study of an enhanced downhill thunderstorm. Statistical analyses of the
142 relationship is conducted in section 4 between wind profile, convergence and the
143 evolution of downhill thunderstorms. A summary and concluding remarks are given in
144 section 5.

145 **2. Methodology and data**

146 *2.1. Identification of downhill thunderstorms*

147 To study the downhill thunderstorms in Beijing, areas in Figure 2a is selected as
148 the region of interest (ROI). Then, ROI is divided into three subregions by terrain height:
149 Area to the west and north of the ridge line is defined as the mountainous region (ROI_m),
150 marking as dark gray in Fig. 2a; and the area with surface elevation less than 100 m is
151 defined as the plain region (ROI_p), marked with white; the light-gray area between these
152 two lines is defined as the downslope region (ROI_d).

153 The flow chart for identifying downhill thunderstorms from composite radar
154 reflectivity is illustrated in Figure 2b, which is mainly comprised of the following steps:
155 Firstly, based on the well-established findings in literature from previous studies (e.g.,
156 Kingsmill, 1995; Weckwerth, 2000; Qin and Chen, 2017; Bai *et al.*, 2019), echoes with
157 radar reflectivity reaching over 35 dBZ triggered in ROI_m are identify as potential
158 downhill thunderstorms. To eliminate false signals, those echoes with area less than 50
159 km² are filtered out.

160 Secondly, these potential clusters are tracked using the area overlapping method
161 (Machado *et al.*, 1998; Huang *et al.*, 2018; Chen *et al.*, 2019). Noted that during
162 merging processes, only the largest cluster is tracked continuously, while others are
163 subsequently terminated. Likewise, during the splitting processes, only the largest
164 cluster is tracked continuously, while others are attributed to newly initiated storms.
165 Suppose the *i*th (*i* = 1, 2, ...) thunderstorm (i.e., S_i) is observed in ROI_m at time *n* (i.e.,
166 T^n), the properties of S_i^n including the centroid (C_i^n), area (A_i^n) and maximum
167 reflectivity (MR_i^n) are obtained.

168 Thirdly, the downhill thunderstorms are defined by whether the potential clusters
169 move into ROI_d and ROI_p. And if the centroid of S_i crosses the ridge line and moves
170 from ROI_m to ROI_d at time *j*, T^j is defined as the starting time when S_i begins to go
171 down the hills. Similarly, if the centroid of S_i crossed the plain line and moves from

172 ROI_d to ROI_p at time k , T^k is defined as the arrival time when S_i reaches the plain. Then,
173 $T^k - T^j$ is defined as the downhill duration of S_i . An example of S_i is depicted in Fig. 2a.

174 Finally, the downhill thunderstorms are classified into two categories, the
175 enhanced downhill storms (EDS) and dissipated downhill storms (DDS). These two
176 subsets are classified by comparing the area and maximum reflectivity at the time T^k
177 to those at time T^j . If at least one of the criterions $A_i^k \geq A_i^j$ and $MR_i^k \geq MR_i^j$ fulfils, S_i
178 is considered as an EDS, otherwise it is defined as a DDS.

179 ~~Most of previous research, either case studies or small sample statistics analysis,~~
180 ~~Jack an objective criterion, used to determine downhill thunderstorms. They typically~~
181 ~~focus on EDS in the presence of high-impact weather and less consider DDS. Compared~~
182 ~~to the existing approaches in the literature, our methodology can discriminate between~~
183 ~~these two types of downhill thunderstorms for its capability in defining the timing and~~
184 ~~location of storms and tracking their corresponding evolution. Therefore, this~~
185 ~~methodology can be readily applied to other regions with similar topography as long as~~
186 ~~weather radar measurements are available.~~

187 2.2. Meteorological data

188 As depicted in section 2.1, radar reflectivity derived from the Doppler radar
189 network dataset with a grid resolution of 0.01° at 10-min intervals during the rainy
190 seasons (i.e., April–September) in 2018–2022 is used to identify downhill
191 thunderstorms over Beijing.

192 ~~Upper-air sounding balloons, launched at the Zhangjiakou (ZJK) and Beijing~~
193 ~~Weather Observatory (BWO) (see their locations in Fig. 1b) are used to provide the~~
194 ~~vertical thermodynamic features during the downhill thunderstorms. Generally, the~~
195 ~~balloons launches twice a day at 0800, and 2000 Local Standard Time (LST), providing~~
196 ~~the vertical profiles of temperature, pressure, relative humidity, and horizontal winds~~
197 ~~with a vertical resolution of 5–8 m (Guo et al., 2020). For the sake of improving the~~
198 ~~prediction skill of summertime storm, an additional radiosonde launch is performed at~~
199 ~~1400 LST daily at the BWO for the period from June 1 to August 31.~~

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229 Ground-based meteorological variables, including 2-m air temperature (T_{2m}), dew
230 point temperature, and pressure measured at 5-min intervals and precipitation measured
231 at 1-min intervals from automated surface stations (AWSs) are also used in the analysis
232 over the study area.

233 Geopotential height at 500 hPa and horizontal wind at 850 hPa from the fifth
234 generation ECMWF reanalysis (ERA5) datasets derived by European Centre for
235 Medium-range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) are used for analysing the large-scale
236 conditions in a case study of a heavy precipitation event in Beijing. The dataset has 37
237 pressure levels, which is made publicly accessible on a grid spacing of 0.25° at hourly
238 intervals (Hoffmann *et al.*, 2019).

239 2.3. Radar wind profiler measurements

240 The RWP mesonet in Beijing, as presented in Table 1 and Fig. 1b, consists of six
241 RWPs positioned at Shangdianzi (SDZ), Huairou (HR), Yanqing (YQ), Haidian (HD),
242 Pinggu (PG), and BWO. The RWPs used in this study are CFL-6 Tropospheric Wind
243 Profilers, manufactured by the 23rd Institute of China Aerospace Science and Industry
244 Corporation. These instruments provide sampling height, horizontal wind direction and
245 speed, vertical wind speed, horizontal credibility, vertical credibility, and refractive
246 index structure parameter. And the data are recorded at 6-min intervals at 34 levels with
247 a vertical resolution of 120 m below 4 km above the ground level (AGL) in low-
248 operating mode, and at 25 levels with a vertical resolution of 240 m from 4 to 10 km
249 AGL in high-operating mode (Liu *et al.*, 2019). Considering that the six RWPs located
250 at different terrain heights, the horizontal velocities measured by each RWP are
251 interpolated to the same altitude, starting from 0.5 km above mean sea level (AMSL)
252 with a vertical resolution of 120 m.

253 Dynamic parameters, such as the horizontal divergence profiles can readily be
254 calculated by vertical wind profile measurements derived from soundings or RWPs
255 distributed along the perimeter of a circle or a triangle over an area (Bellamy, 1949;
256 Carlson and Forbes, 1989; Lee *et al.*, 1995; Bony *et al.*, 2019). The reliability of the
257 measurements and triangle method is demonstrated in the previous work (Guo *et al.*,

258 2023). Thus, we also employ this methodology to calculate the regional mean
259 divergence, vorticity and vertical velocity profiles within the triangular regions built by
260 the RWP's mesonet.

261 3. A case study of an EDS event

262 EDSs present significant challenges for local weather forecasters in accurately
263 predicting the intensity of precipitation during nowcasting. In this section, an
264 observational case study of this type of downhill thunderstorm is selected to explore
265 the role of thermodynamic and dynamic environment on the evolution of the downhill
266 thunderstorms.

267 This storm originated from the ROI_m and began to go down the hill at 1200 LST of
268 28 September 2018, then hit Beijing after approximately 2–3 hours. Several AWSs in
269 the Yanqing District recorded lightning activity and hails accompanied with an hourly
270 rainfall amount of over 30 mm from 1430 to 1530 LST. It is noteworthy that the
271 intensity of downhill thunderstorm became weakened before 1400 LST but intensified
272 as it approached the plain area of Beijing.

273 3.1. Synoptic background

274 Sounding taken at the ZJK (Figure 3a) at 0800 LST located in the westerly flow
275 sector, showed a surface-based temperature inversion below 900 hPa and a deep dry
276 layer aloft from 850 hPa up to about 400 hPa. At the same time, similar temperature
277 and humidity stratification was seen at the BWO (Figure 3b) with little convective
278 available potential energy (CAPE) of 170.8 J kg⁻¹ and convective inhibition (CIN) of
279 61 J kg⁻¹. The veering of a northwesterly wind to a westerly wind from 850 hPa to above
280 600 hPa indicated the presence of cold advection at 0800 LST. Unfortunately, no
281 sounding was available to elucidate the temporal evolution of atmospheric
282 thermodynamic and dynamic environments during the passage of EDS from 1200 LST
283 to 1500 LST. We can only speculate that the thermal stratification seems insufficient to
284 facilitate the initiation and subsequent organization of deep convection, even though

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287 considering the possible enhancement of unstable layer as the mixed layer grew after
288 0800 LST

289 Then, we resort to the synoptic pattern from ERA-5 reanalysis at hourly intervals.
290 At 500 hPa (Figure 3c), the large-scale conditions at 1400 LST on 28 Sep 2018 was
291 characterized with a deep cold vortex at the border of Mongolia and China, and Beijing
292 was situated in the cold sector, with a cold center approximately 500 km to the south,
293 and influenced by strong westerly flows. At 850 hPa (Figure 3d), a trough extended
294 from northeast to southwest over ROI_d, resulting in significant southwesterly flow prior
295 to the trough over Beijing. The veering of a southwesterly wind at 850 hPa to a westerly
296 wind 500 hPa indicated the presence of warm advection. The changeover from cold
297 advection at 0800 LST to warm advection at 1400 LST in the lower troposphere could
298 account for the subsequent deepening organization of convection after the thunderstorm
299 entered the plain.

300 3.2. Radar reflectivity and surface observations

301 Radar reflectivity at 1200 LST (Figure 4a) showed that a convective line with
302 several convective cores was detected across the ridge line and moved gradually
303 southeastward into ROI_d driven by the low-level northwesterly flows. Surface
304 streamlines evidently showed dominant west-to-southwesterly surface winds in ROI_m
305 and south-to-southwesterly flows in ROI_p (also see Figure 4a). In downslope regions,
306 the local mountain-valley orientations appeared to account for up-valley flows in
307 various directions. A surface analysis at 1200 LST, given in Figure 5a, shows a humid
308 center in the northwest of the mountain region due to the previous precipitation,
309 whereas the relative humidity of the downslope and plain was less than 60%. The
310 thermal boundary near the ridge line which generated by the terrain could also be seen.
311 T_{2m} over the plain area was on average of greater than 20 °C, whereas the mean T_{2m}
312 over the mountainous region was less than 10°C. The large northwest-southeast-
313 oriented temperature gradient appeared to account for the intensification and better
314 organization of the at 1230 LST (Figure 5b). Surface convergence emerged ahead of

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336 the convective line, indicated by the streamlines in Figure 4b, which were associated
337 with a pre-squall mesotrough/mesolow.

338 At 1300 LST, convective line with reflectivity exceeding 35 dBZ had spitted into
339 two segments (Figure 4c). The northern segment was completely separated from the
340 main storm in the southwest and then expanded northeastward by the intersecting
341 streamlines, with another convective cell initiated near the local converging center
342 around 117°E, 41.5°N before 1330 LST (Figure 4d). The southern segment maintained
343 with the total rainfall exceeding 10 mm from 1300 to 1400 LST. Meanwhile, the wet
344 center gradually moved eastward to the northeast of the mountain region (Figure 5c-d).
345 Until 1400 LST, the convective cells started to merge into a linear convective system,
346 and the frontal edge of the convection line had arrived at triangle 1 with weaker
347 intensity than before (Figure 4e).

348 Further, we attempt to examine the roles of cold pool and low-level wind shear in
349 maintaining the intense squall line in accordance with the theory of Rotunno et al.
350 (1988). However, it's difficult to perform a comprehensive and quantitative analysis
351 due to the inhomogeneous environment and measurement. Here, we qualitatively use
352 the horizontal winds over YQ (Figure 6a) to estimate vertical wind shear (VWS) om
353 the downslope and T_{2m} to identify a cold pool (Figure 5). At 1300 LST, the wind speed
354 below 1.5 km AMSL was weaker than 5 m s^{-1} while was stronger than 15 m s^{-1} above
355 2.5 km AMSL. The maximum value of VWS occurred at the altitude of 1.8 km AMSL
356 with the value exceeding $20 \text{ m s}^{-1} \text{ km}^{-1}$. In less than 10 minutes, cold downdrafts
357 produced a sharp drop in T_{2m} by 6°C in the south of the convective cells (Figure 5c-d).
358 The effects of the resulting low-level VWS might balance with those of the cool pool,
359 which helped stimulate the development of more intense storms from 1300 to 1330 LST.
360 Meanwhile, the accompanying evaporative cooling in the descending flows
361 strengthened the cold pool. After 1330 LST, horizontal wind speeds in the lowest 2 km
362 layer strengthened to shrink the low-level VWS to about $10 \text{ m s}^{-1} \text{ km}^{-1}$. The cold-pool-
363 induced horizontal vorticity could overpower that of the low-level wind shear, partly
364 facilitating the dissipated radar echo before 1400 LST (Figure 5e). Moreover, this might

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386 be related to the relatively strong cold pool located in the south, which potentially cut
387 off the warm southerly inflow from the plains to the mountains. Then, cool pool
388 weakened with convection and the overpowering effect diminished.

389 As the storm approached ROI_p from 1400 LST, composite radar reflectivity shows
390 that it was significantly strengthened to an intense and well-organized squall line,
391 (Figure 4e-4g). AWSs within triangle 1 captured its associated rainfall. Abrupt increase
392 in surface pressure by +3 hPa was seen across the gust front in the triangle 1 when the
393 maximum rainfall rate exceeded 3mm (6min)⁻¹ (not shown). Except for the above-
394 mentioned balanced state between cool pool and low-level vertical wind shear, this
395 enhancement could potentially be associated with the dynamic lifting over plain area.
396 Due to the disadvantage of surface observations in monitoring the vertical dynamic
397 features, we have to resort to the examination of the evolution of high-resolution
398 divergence and vertical velocity derived from the fine-scale RWP mesonet in the
399 following subsection.

400 3.3. Divergence and vertical velocity

401 Before the convective system reached the plain area, sustained southwesterly wind
402 above 2 km AMSL was observed after 1200 LST at YQ (Figure 6a), which was likely
403 driven by the synoptic pattern, accompanied with upper-layer divergence and
404 downdraft in triangle 1 (Figure 6b). The much weaker near-surface southerly wind and
405 unnoticeable divergence could to a certain extent be influenced by the valley flows at
406 the foot of the mountains. Meanwhile, a peak of positive vorticity exceeding 10⁻⁴ s⁻¹
407 and a deep layer of negative vorticity up to 5 km AMSL in triangle 1 were maintained
408 during this time period (Figure 6c). Then, pronounced southerly wind occurred after
409 1300 LST that corresponded to the rapidly intensification in convergence below 2 km,
410 providing an uplifting background, albeit less than 0.1 m s⁻¹. This updraft assisted the
411 upward transport of moist air in the planetary boundary layer (PBL), which facilitated
412 the subsequent formation of clouds and convective rainfall. Additionally, a vorticity
413 maximum near 3×10⁻⁴ s⁻¹ at 1348 LST in the PBL might also be favorable for
414 organized convective development.

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443 The low-level wind speeds over YQ started to increase to 10 m s^{-1} as a result of
 444 the downward momentum transport. The subsequent enhancement in convergence
 445 coincided well with the intensification of southwesterly winds ($>10 \text{ m s}^{-1}$) up to 3 km
 446 ASML after 1418 LST. Such intensification in convergence and updraft were also well
 447 captured by triangles 2 (not shown), even with more than one hour in advance of the
 448 convective rainfall arrival. Upward motion in triangle 1 increased in amplitude and
 449 deepened rapidly in depth as the squall line propagated southeastward, and triggered
 450 rainfall over triangle 1. The most intense convergence occurred at 1430 LST and
 451 extended from 1 km to above 2.5 km AMSL afterwards as a result of latent heat release
 452 during cloud formation. The maximum vertical velocity reached 0.35 m s^{-1} around 3.5
 453 km AMSL, which were about 6 min prior to the peak area-averaged rainfall rate at 1448
 454 LST. The significant convergence diminished after 1454 LST, when deep convection
 455 moved out of triangle 1 (Figure 4h). Downdrafts are found with moderate upward and
 456 downward motions in the stratiform area.

457 Interestingly, as the squall line propagated eastward and approached the urban
 458 center after 1500 LST, it rapidly dissipated as the area of convective echo was reduced
 459 by a scale factor of 4/5 until 1600 LST (not shown). This appeared to result from the
 460 blocking of water supply by the high risings over the Beijing's built-up area, the so-
 461 called "urban bifurcation" effects on moving thunderstorms (Changnon, 1981; Zhang,
 462 2020). In this case, deep convection in the urban center and northern suburban area
 463 were suppressed due to the urban blocking effects. It was consistent with the persistent
 464 low-level divergence over triangle 3 and 4 with the maximum value of $3 \times 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$
 465 occurring near surface (not shown). Clearly, this result can help understand the urban
 466 building-barrier induced divergence and the dissipation of thunderstorm.

4. Comparison with a DDS event

468 In the preceding section, low-level convergence is an effective signal for the
 469 maintenance of an EDS event. In this section, we present a DDS event that occurred on
 470 23 June 2018, in attempt to investigate the difference of pre-storm environment for two
 471 types of downhill thunderstorms. Similar to the trajectory of the EDS, the DDS began

Moved up [2]: At 1412 LST, wind speed below 1.5 km AMSL is weaker than 5 m s^{-1} while is stronger than 15 m s^{-1} above 2.5 km AMSL. The low-level wind speeds over YQ

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495 to go downhill at 1600 LST (Figure 7a) and then propagated southeastward with the
496 area larger than 1000 km². It had dissipated rapidly upon reaching the plain of Beijing
497 after 1900 LST and diminished until 2100 LST.

498 Figure 8a shows the SkewT/Log P diagram derived from the sounding taken at the
499 BWO at 1400 BJT, 23 June 2018. It can be seen that a dry troposphere was presented
500 in the early afternoon. As the time lapsed, the humidity above 700 hPa increased at
501 2000 BJT (Figure 8b), even though the surface was characterized by a dry layer near
502 the surface. The surface relative humidity was less than 40% with T_{2m} exceeding 30°C
503 and the dew point temperature less than 20°C. The CIN slightly decreased from 280.2
504 J kg⁻¹ at 1400 LST to 264.0 J kg⁻¹ at 2000 LST. By comparison, the CAPE increased
505 from 35.5 J kg⁻¹ at 1400 LST to 483.0 J kg⁻¹ at 2000 BJT. As shown in Figure 8c, the
506 study area was situated to the west of the high-pressure ridge at 500 hPa and influenced
507 by northerly flows in front of the ridge, whereas the lower levels were dominated by
508 weak southwesterly winds below 850 hPa.

509 In the next, we examine the dissipation stage of downhill storm when it reached
510 triangle 1 with a focus on the evolution of atmospheric dynamic variables. A sustained
511 near-surface southeasterly winds was found over YQ before 1900 LST from the surface
512 streamlines and vertical wind profile, that are shown in Figures 7b, c and 9a. The low-
513 level troposphere over triangle 1 was dominated by distinct deep divergence (Figure 9a)
514 and positive vorticity (Figure 9b) below 2 km AMSL. The deep divergence of regional
515 flows and larger CIN more tended to suppress the vertical motion breaking through the
516 resistance of a stable atmosphere (Xiao et al., 2019).

517 As the downhill thunderstorm reached YQ at 1900 LST (Figure 7d), the near-
518 surface wind turned into weak northwesterly winds accompanied by the rapid
519 intensification of convergence over triangle 1 under the force of the convective system
520 itself. The strongest convergence of this event with a value of $-3.8 \times 10^{-4} \text{ s}^{-1}$ below 1
521 km AMSL at 1906 LST. It is worth noting that the divergence layer above 1.5 km AMSL
522 persisted during the occurrence of precipitation after 1924 LST. Even though there were
523 the cyclone motion and weak updrafts with the maximum vertical velocity reaching 0.1

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570 $m s^{-1}$, it was not enough to penetrate the divergence layer and lift the vapor to the lifting
571 condensation level (LCL) at around 800 hPa as shown in Figure 8b. The maximum
572 composite radar reflectivity of the echo sharply decreased from 64.5 dBZ at 1900 LST
573 to 53.5 dBZ at 2000 LST with the area shrinking by half (Figure 7e). The rainfall was
574 terminated which was consistent with the dominated low-level divergence until 2100
575 LST (Figure 7f).

576 The above comparison indicates that a linear system was intensified in to the squall
577 line with fast speed in front of a shortwave troughs in the EDS event. In the DDS event,
578 some scattered convective cells were organized into clusters as they propagated to the
579 plain under a weak ridge and then dissipated. For these two cases for EDS and DDS
580 event, the thermal stratification indicated the presence of unfavorable pre-storm
581 environmental settings with insufficient unstable energy and inadequate moisture. The
582 dynamic condition played a pivotal role for convective development during the passage
583 of the downhill thunderstorm. Compared with the DDS event, the enhanced southerly
584 winds and corresponding convergence in the lower level were distinct features of the
585 EDS. The above results indicate that the RWP mesonet could capture well the vertical
586 profiles of horizontal divergence and vertical motion, favorably supporting the
587 detection of convection.

588 Notably, small-scale variations of airflow in the narrow valley at the intersection
589 of Mt. Taihang and Mt. Yan undoubtedly impacts the dynamics of the EDS and DDS
590 event (Xiao et al., 2017). In other words, the storms from northwest need to pass by the
591 downslope, valley, and then upslope to reach the plain. The complex local terrain should
592 be taken into account the factors for the evolution of thunderstorms during the
593 southeastward propagation. However, the current resolution of observations is not
594 capable of resolving the dynamic processes associated with the convective development
595 in that region. We hope further explore this factor with the help of the numerical
596 simulation in the future.

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597 **5. Statistical results**

598 *5.1. General features of downhill thunderstorm events*

599 To obtain a more robust understanding of the climatology for downhill
600 thunderstorm evolution in Beijing, an in-depth statistical analysis is carried out in this
601 study. According to the methodology mentioned in Section 2.1, we firstly identify a
602 total number of 95 downhill thunderstorms triggered in ROI_m and moved into ROI_d and
603 ROI_p in the study area (Figure 1b) based on the radar reflectivity datasets during the
604 rainy seasons (i.e., April- September) in 2018-2022. We perform a statistical analysis of
605 the occurrence number of radar reflectivity that is equal to or greater than 35 dBZ on a
606 grid spacing of 0.01° at 10-min intervals during these downhill thunderstorm events.

607 As shown in Figure 10a, downhill thunderstorms tend to initiate in ROI_d with
608 strong steep slopes near the ridges of the Yan Mountains associated with solar heating
609 in the afternoon. The highest-frequency center is found mainly over the western
610 downhill area extending to the plain with the occurrence number exceeding 400, due
611 possibly to the large amount of eastward propagation of thunderstorms driven by the
612 westerly or southwesterly flows during the warm seasons in Beijing (Chen *et al.*, 2012,
613 2014).

614 For all downhill thunderstorms, the relationship between the initial area and
615 length-width ratio of thunderstorms at the beginning and the relative variation of area
616 to the time it arrives at ROI_p is analyzed. Here, we record the maximum (minimum) axis
617 length of the radar echo with reflectivity ≥ 35 dBZ as the length (width) of the downhill
618 thunderstorm, respectively. The area and length-width ratio tends to reflect the
619 horizontal scale and organization of convective storms. Generally, linear convective
620 storms show a length-width ratio greater than or equal to 3.0 (Chen and Chou, 1993;
621 Meng *et al.*, 2013; Yang *et al.*, 2017). The results show that several mature
622 thunderstorms with the area larger than 5000 km² tend to dissipate during the downhill
623 process with weaker intensity and area, which are likely due to the splitting processes
624 (Figure 10b). Convective lines commonly intensify to the squall lines, but several
625 isolated and loose thunderstorms expand rapidly during the downhill process with

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633 increasing area when entering the plain, which may be associated with the favorable
634 regional-scale lower tropospheric environment.

635 It is found that 63 thunderstorms events tend to be enhanced after it moved into
636 the downhill and urban areas, accounting for about 66 % of the total number of downhill
637 thunderstorms events, whereas 32 thunderstorm events tend to be dissipated. Most of
638 the DDSs arrive at the plain area in mornings and late afternoons (Figure 10c).
639 Specifically, 11 and 18 DDSs arrive at the plain area during the period of 0600–1200
640 and 1600–0000 LST which account for 34% and 56% of all DDSs, respectively. In
641 contrast, the EDSs tend to occur in early mornings and afternoons. 18 and 43 EDSs
642 arrive at the plain area before 0800 LST and after 1400 LST, respectively,
643 corresponding to the percentage of 26% and 68%. Meso-scale circulations driven by
644 the urban heat island (UHI) effect and topography may contribute to the difference of
645 downhill storms' duration. As presented by Dou et al. (2015), the magnitude of UHI of
646 Beijing at the nighttime are stronger than in daytime. In the early morning, low-level
647 westerly and northwesterly winds converged into the Beijing's plain area because of a
648 combination of downslope mountain breezes and strong-UHI-induced convergence,
649 which accelerate the speed of thunderstorms towards the plain. The weaker
650 southeasterly upslope valley breezes in the late afternoon and evening make downhill
651 storms slow down and contribute to the prolonged duration. One caveat is that the
652 conclusions may vary by the number of available sample cases.

653 5.2. Dynamic conditions

654 We present the trajectories and their moving directions of two types of downhill
655 storms (Figure 11) to confirm that the western part of ROI_d is a key area for the
656 development of downhill thunderstorms. To better understand the similarities and
657 differences between EDS and DDS from the perspective of ambient atmospheric
658 environment, three-dimensional dynamic structures derived from RWP mesonet are
659 analyzed. Variables including wind speed, vertical wind shear, u-component and v-
660 component of wind, divergence and vorticity profiles are used to provide information
661 of dynamic structures before the downhill thunderstorms arrive. Thus, we select 68

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684 downhill thunderstorms, including 50 EDSs and 18 DDSs, which pass through triangle
685 1 to the plain among all 95 samples and focus on these meso-scale parameters from YQ
686 station and triangle 1 in the following discussions.

687 The mean vertical wind profiles two hours prior to the arrival of the thunderstorms
688 are investigated. Horizontal wind speed, vertical wind shear, u-component and v-
689 component from the RWP in YQ, and divergence and vorticity over triangle 1 are
690 calculated (Figure 12). Results indicate that wind speed preceding EDSs and DDSs is
691 about 5 m s^{-1} below 1.5 km (Figure 12a). Much stronger horizontal winds with the
692 maximum wind speed exceeding 15 m s^{-1} are observed in the 1.5-5 km layer in advance
693 of the EDS events. The VWS below 5 km AMSL have no significant differences
694 between EDSs and DDSs before their arrival (Figure 12b). But the VWS preceding
695 EDS events is little bit stronger than that preceding DDS events, which could be likely
696 associated the critical influence that high vertical wind shear exerts on convection.
697 EDSs and DDSs mainly appears under the near-surface southeasterly and prevalent
698 southwesterly low-level flow near the foothills. The persistent supply of water vapor is
699 key for the successful propagation to the plains of downhill storms, but doesn't
700 determine the enhancement or dissipation of convection. Notably, the average v-
701 component of wind decreases to near-zero above 3 km AMSL. The existence of stronger
702 westerly flow above 3 km AMSL is a favorable condition for the intensification of
703 downhill storms (Figure 12c), which well corroborates the results from case study.

704 The mean vertical structure of divergence and vorticity are given in Figure 12e and
705 f. Before the arrival of downhill storms, one can see the presence of weak divergence
706 near the surface due to the weak wind. Compared with EDSs, the divergence around
707 1.5-3 km AMSL is more evident near the arrival of DDSs with the maximum value of
708 10^{-4} s^{-1} . When thunderstorms pass by, the strong divergence in the low level is not
709 conducive to the extension of upward movement within the boundary layer which
710 attributes to the dissipation of storms, especially when instability and moisture supply
711 are unfavorable. In contrast, the high-level divergence at around 4-5 km altitudes
712 promotes the compensation of the moist air and the upward transport heat, which

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754 ultimately reinforce the storm. The vorticity field in Figure 8f is characterized by
755 cyclonic flows at lower-levels and anticyclonic flows at midlevel, which is possibly
756 dependent on the synoptic forcing. The vorticity prior to EDSs seems to be stronger
757 than that of DDSs, the cooperation between lower-level cyclones and less divergence
758 of convective system tends to promote the maintenance of updrafts, leading to heavy
759 rainfall.

760 In the previous work, it has been confirmed that these dynamical variables derived
761 from the RWP mesonet in Beijing provide strong supports for machine-learning-based
762 prediction of severe convection (Wu *et al.*, 2023). The results therein show that the
763 usage of RWP observational data as the random forest model input tends to result in
764 better performance in the rainfall/non-rainfall forecast 30 min in advance of rainfall
765 onset than using the ERA5 reanalysis data as inputs. In the future, these dynamic
766 observations and methodologies need to be further incorporated into machine learning
767 model for improving the prediction skill of downhill thunderstorms.

768 6. Summary and concluding remarks

769 Given the large uncertainty in prediction and huge impact, here we revisit the
770 evolution of downhill thunderstorms and concurrent ambient atmospheric dynamic
771 structures as derived from a high-density radar wind profiler (RWP) mesonet in Beijing.
772 This RWP mesonet in Beijing is shown to be capable of continuously observing the
773 horizontal wind fields in the lower troposphere with ultra-high vertical and temporal
774 resolutions. It follows that the profiles of vertical wind shear, divergence and vorticity
775 are derived from the triangle algorithm, which are used to analyze the pre-storm
776 dynamic environment for the downhill storms.

777 First of all, a novel objective methodology has been developed to identify and
778 track the downhill thunderstorms. Combined with the changes in area or intensity of
779 radar echoes, enhanced downhill thunderstorms (EDSs) and dissipated downhill
780 thunderstorms (DDSs) are discriminated. A case study of an EDS during the period of
781 1200-1500 LST of 28 September 2018 is performed. Of interest is that the intensity of

Deleted: Compared with DDSs, the near-surface convergence is more evident near the arrival of EDSs, cooperating with the upward motion over the plain (figure 8b). The lifting may contribute to closer coupling between boundary layer and clouds, especially when instability and moisture supply are unfavorable.

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808 downhill thunderstorm became weaker before 1400 LST but intensified as it
809 approached the plain area of Beijing. Meanwhile, we present a DDS event that occurred
810 on 23 June 2018 in attempt to investigate the difference of pre-storm environment for
811 two types of downhill thunderstorms. For these two cases, of EDS and DDS, the thermal
812 stratification indicated the presence of unfavorable pre-storm environmental settings
813 with insufficient unstable energy and inadequate moisture. The dynamic condition
814 played a pivotal role for convective development during the passage of the downhill
815 thunderstorm. Compared with the DDS event, the enhanced southerly winds and the
816 corresponding convergence in the lower level were distinct features of the EDS. The
817 above results indicate that the RWP mesonet could capture well the vertical profiles of
818 horizontal divergence and vertical motion, favorably supporting the detection of
819 convection.

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820 To obtain a robust result concerning the evolution characteristics of the downhill
821 thunderstorms in Beijing, an in-depth statistical analysis is merited. The beginning and
822 arrival time of a downhill thunderstorm event are defined as the moment when the
823 centroid crosses the ridge line and plain, respectively. A total of 95 downhill
824 thunderstorms events occurring in the study area are identified based on the datasets of
825 radar reflectivity at 10-min intervals during the rainy season (i.e., April- September) of
826 2018–2022. The high occurrence frequency center of convection is found mainly
827 resides west to Beijing’ plain area. And the area variation of convection is not sensitive
828 to the initial morphology itself. It is found that 63 thunderstorms tend to be enhanced
829 with larger area or radar reflectivity after it moved into the downhill and urban areas,
830 accounting for about 66 %. The statistical analysis indicates that most of the downhill
831 thunderstorms affect the plains in the morning and late afternoon. Most downhill
832 processes last about two hours while thunderstorms from the northwest and the north
833 may take a longer time possibly due to the further distance.

Deleted: The synoptic background shows the presence of unfavorable thermodynamic conditions with small CAPE and inadequate water vapor supply. The enhanced southerly flow in the lower troposphere and the corresponding convergence detected by the RWP mesonet, together with automated weather observations, could favorably support the deepening organization of convection.

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834 Thus, we illustrate the statistical analysis of dynamic quantities, such as horizontal
835 winds, vertical wind shears derived from the RWP at the mountain foot, and divergence
836 and vorticity derived from the west-most triangular region in the RWP mesonet, in

850 relation to the enhanced and dissipated downhill storms. Results indicate that much
851 stronger westerly winds are observed in 1.5-5 km layer in advance of the EDS events
852 and exert a critical influence on the development of storms. Furthermore, divergence at
853 around 4-5 km altitudes promotes the compensation of the moist air and the upward
854 transport heat, which ultimately reinforce the storm. Weaker lower-level divergence and
855 cyclonic flows over the plain contribute to the development of robust updrafts and
856 closer coupling between boundary layer and clouds, which favor the intensification of
857 downhill thunderstorms.

858 Continuous measurements of the accurate dynamic quantities will make it
859 possible to enable a more critical and quantitative evaluation for the development of
860 downhill thunderstorms in the future. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned dynamic
861 features, which are necessary to diagnose the evolution of thunderstorms, are not
862 adequate to fully characterize the environment in which downhill storms are embedded.
863 In particular, more explicit analysis of thermodynamic parameters, such as CAPE, K
864 index, precipitable water, will be performed to characterize the pre-storm environments
865 in detail.

866 Data Availability

867 We are grateful to ECMWF for providing ERA5 hourly data
868 (<https://www.ecmwf.int/en/forecasts/datasets/reanalysis-datasets/era5/>). The radar
869 wind profiler data are obtained from the National Meteorological Information Center
870 of China Meteorological Administration (<https://data.cma.cn>), which can be only
871 accessed via registration.

872 Acknowledgments

873 This work was supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China under
874 Grants of 42325501, U2142209 and 42105090. Last but not least, we appreciated
875 tremendously the constructive comments and suggestions made by the anonymous
876 reviewers that significantly improved the quality of our manuscript.

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902 **Author Contributions**

903 The study was completed with close cooperation between all authors. JG designed the
904 research framework; XG and JG performed the analysis and drafted the original
905 manuscript; JG, TC, NL, FZ and YS helped revise the manuscript.

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906 **Completing interests**

907 The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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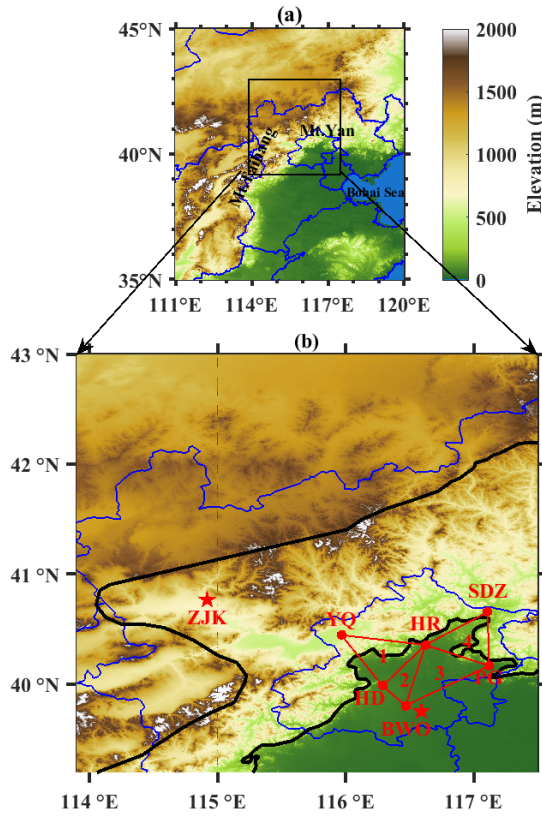
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Table 1. Summary of six radar wind profilers in Beijing.

Station Name	Acronym	Lat. (°N)	Lon. (°E)	Alt. (m, AMSL)
Shangdianzi	SDZ	40.66	117.11	286.5
Huairou	HR	40.36	116.63	75.6
Yanqing	YQ	40.45	115.97	489.4
Haidian	HD	39.98	116.28	46.9
Pinggu	PG	40.17	117.12	32.1
Beijing Weather Observatory	BWO	39.79	116.47	32.5

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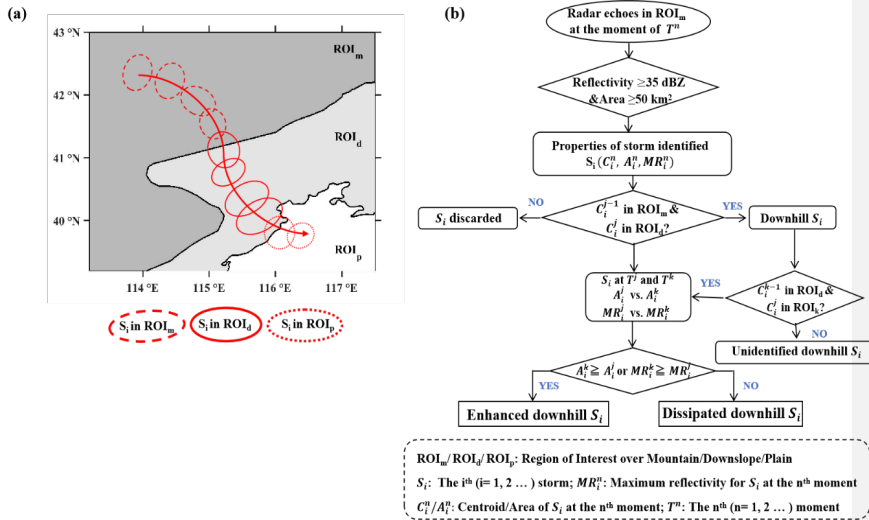
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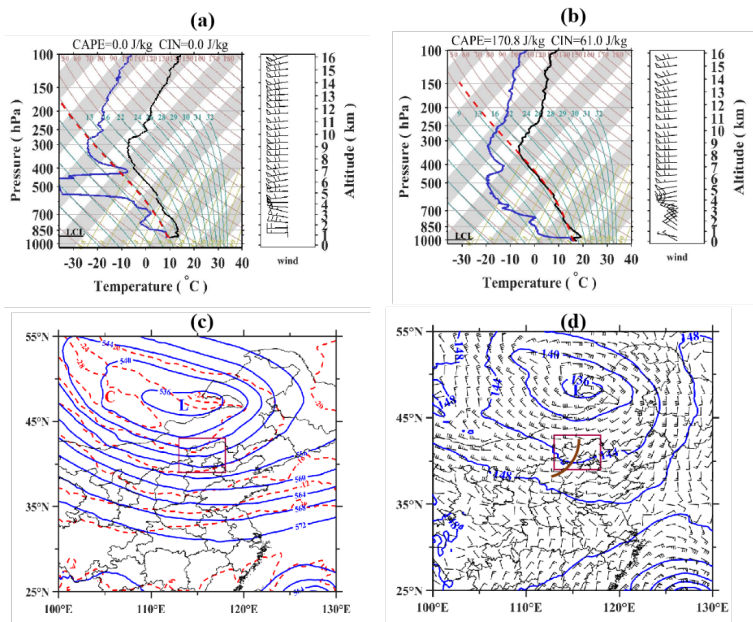
1258 **Figure 1.** (a) Spatial distribution of the topography over northern China with the blue
 1259 line denoting the Province boundaries. The locations of Taihang Mountains (Mt.
 1260 Taihang), Yan Mountains (Mt. Yan) and Bohai Sea are written in black text. (b) Map of
 1261 Beijing with six RWPs (red dots) deployed at Shangdianzi (SDZ), Huairou (HR),
 1262 Yanqing (YQ), Haidian (HD), Pinggu (PG), and the Beijing Weather Observatory
 1263 (BWO) and surrounding areas. The BWO and Zhangjiakou (ZJK) are deployed with an
 1264 L-band radiosonde (red pentagrams). The four red triangles denote the areas used to
 1265 calculate the horizontal divergence with the triangle method. The left black line mark
 1266 the ridge line, and the right black line mark the plain line that denotes the 200-m terrain
 1267 elevation.

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1270 **Figure 2.** (a) Definition of the ROIs and the schematic diagram showing the track of a
 1271 downhill thunderstorm S_i (red circle). The red arrow denotes the trajectory of S_i. (b)
 1272 Flow chart showing the primary processes to identify downhill thunderstorms in this
 1273 study.



1274

1275 **Figure 3.** (a) SkewT/Log P diagram ~~derived from the~~ upper-air sounding at the ZJK at
 1276 0800 LST of 28 Sep 2018, (b) Same as (a) but for the upper-air sounding at the BWO.

1277 (c) Horizontal distribution of geopotential height at 500 hPa (solid blue lines at 40 gpm
 1278 intervals) and temperature at 500 hPa (dashed red lines at intervals of 4 °C) at 1400
 1279 LST of 28 Sep 2018, both of which are obtained from the ERA5 hourly reanalysis data.

1280 The purple rectangle indicates the location of the study area shown in Figure 1b. Letters
 1281 “L” and “C” denote the centers of a low-pressure system, and cold air, respectively. (d)

1282 Same as (c), but for the fields of geopotential height at 850 hPa (solid blue lines at 40
 1283 gpm intervals) and horizontal wind at 850 hPa. Note the distribution of a trough along
 1284 the thick brown line.

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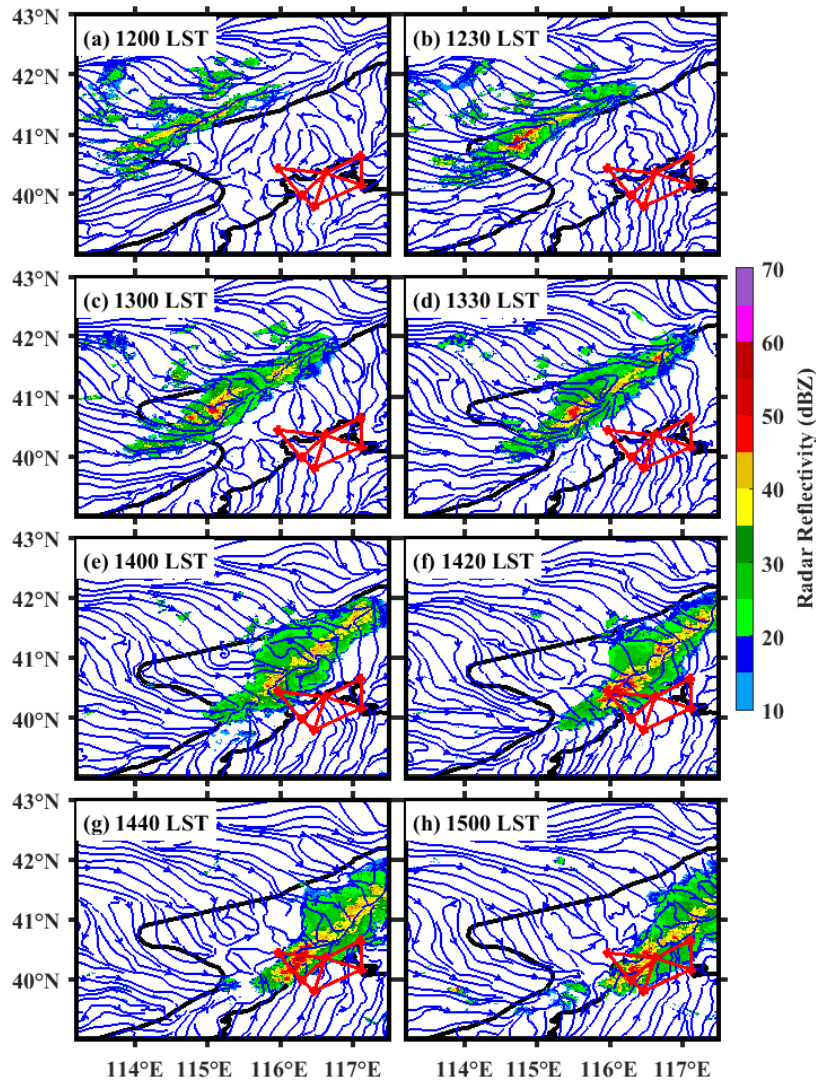
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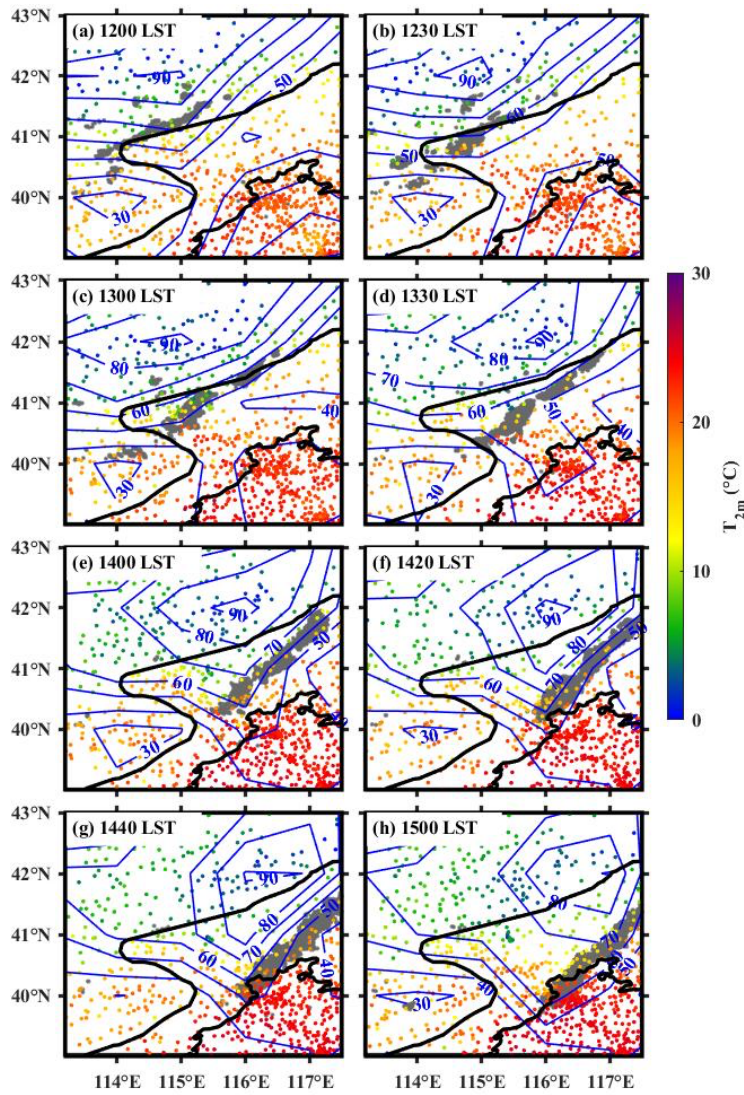
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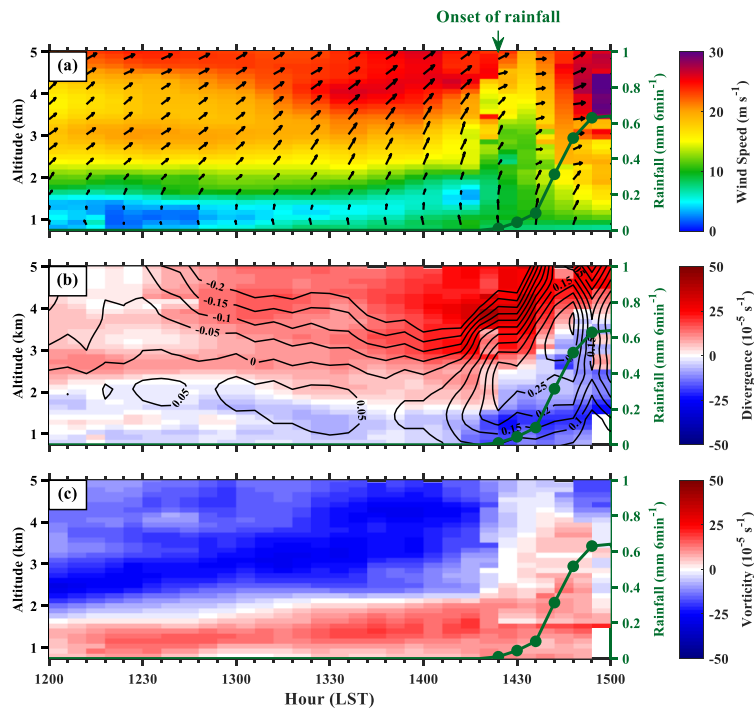
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 1295 **Figure 4.** Evolution of the composite radar reflectivity (color-shaded, dBZ) and surface
 1296 streamlines derived from AWSs for the case of an EDS event occurring during the
 1297 period from (a) 1200 to (h) 1500 LST on 28 September 2018. The four red triangles
 1298 denote the regions used to calculate the horizontal divergence and vertical motion with
 1299 the triangle method. The two black lines mark the boundaries of the ROI_m, ROI_d and
 1300 ROI_p.



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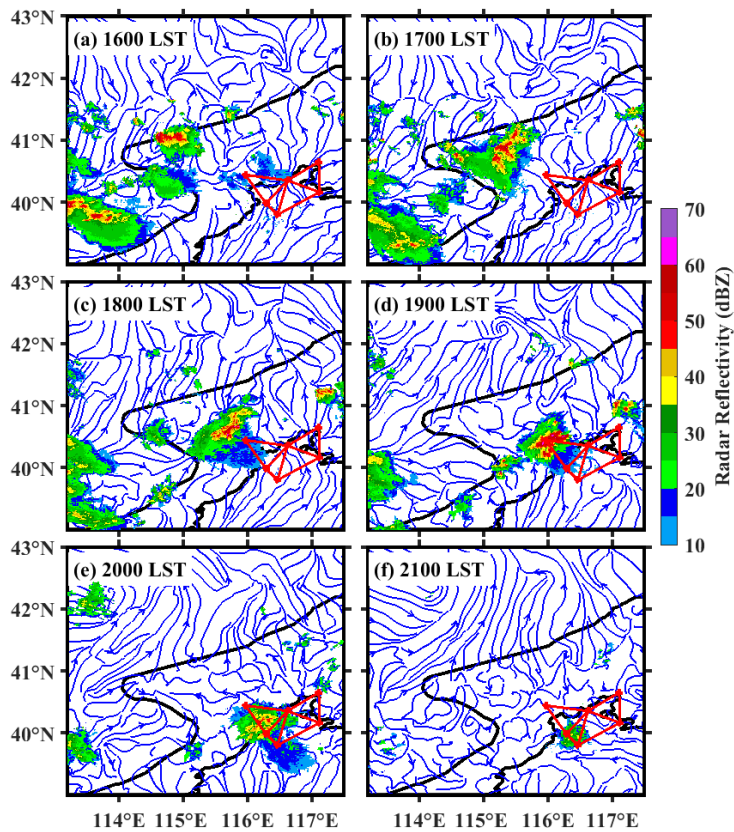
1303 **Figure 5.** Evolution of the T_{2m} (color-shaded, °C) and relative humidity (contour, %)
 1304 derived from AWSs from (a) 1200 to (h) 1500 LST 28 Sep 2018. The left black line is
 1305 the ridge line, the right black line is the plain line which denotes the 200-m terrain
 1306 elevation. The gray region denotes the position of echo with radar reflectivity exceeding
 1307 35 dBZ.



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1309 **Figure 6.** (a) Time series of horizontal wind vectors ($\text{m} \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$) with wind speeds shaded
 1310 in the 0.5–5-km AMSL layer during the period of 1200–1500 LST 28 Sep 2018 at YQ
 1311 station. Green-dotted lines represent the triangle-area-averaged rainfall amount (mm
 1312 6min^{-1}) of triangle 1. (b) same as (a), but for the vertical profiles of the triangle-averaged
 1313 divergence (shaded, 10^{-5} s^{-1}) and vertical velocity (contour, $\text{m} \text{ s}^{-1}$) for triangle 1. (c)
 1314 same as (b), but for the vertical profiles of the vorticity (shaded, 10^{-5} s^{-1}) for triangle 1.

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1317 **Figure 7.** Same as Figure 4, but for the case of a DDS event occurring during the period
 1318 from (a) 1600 to (f) 2100 LST 23 June 2018.

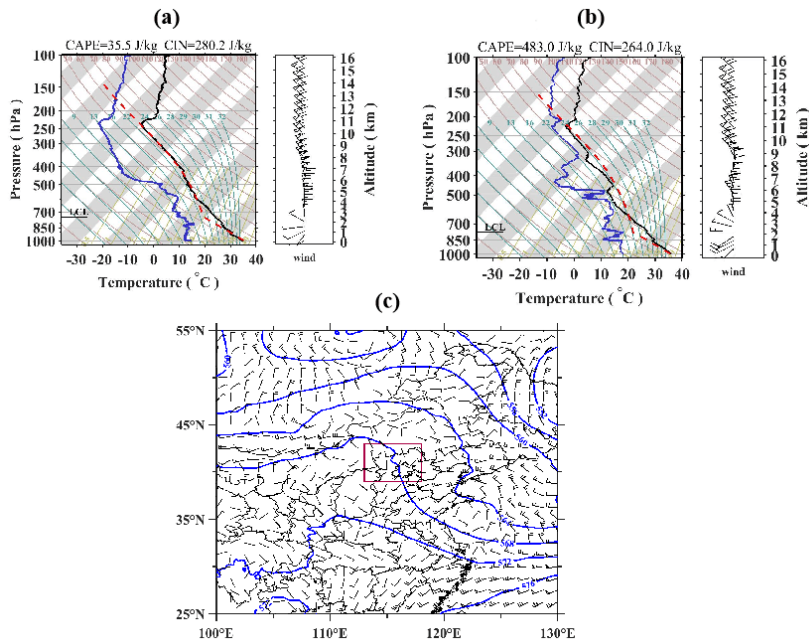
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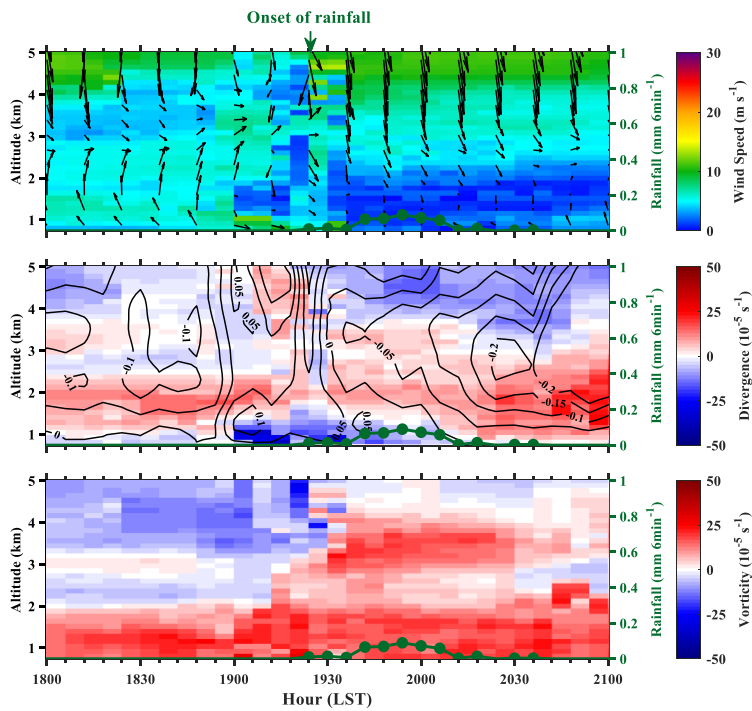
Figure 8. SkewT/Log P diagram derived from the upper-air sounding at the BWO at (a) 1400 LST and (b) 2000 LST of 23 June 2018, (c) Horizontal distribution of geopotential height at 500 hPa (solid blue lines at 40 gpm intervals) and horizontal winds at 850 hPa (wind barbs) at 2000 LST of 23 June 2018, which are both obtained from the ERA5 hourly reanalysis data. The purple rectangle indicates the location of the study area shown in Figure 1b.

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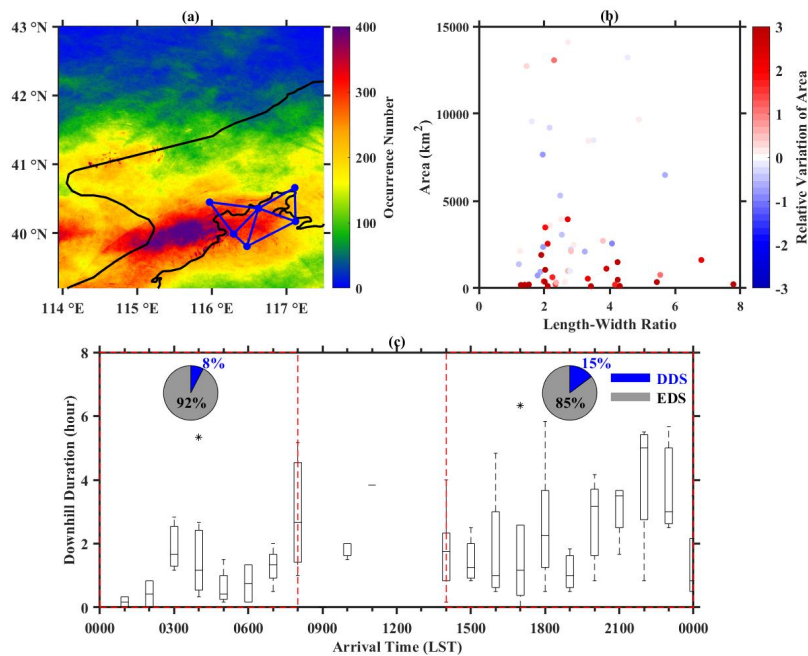


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1340 **Figure 9.** (a) Time series of horizontal wind vectors ($\text{m} \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$) with wind speeds shaded
 1341 in the 0.5–5-km AMSL layer during the period of 1800–2100 LST 23 June 2018 at YQ
 1342 station. Green-dotted lines represent the triangle-area-averaged rainfall amount (mm
 1343 6min^{-1}) of triangle 1. (b) same as (a), but for the vertical profiles of the triangle-averaged
 1344 divergence (shaded, 10^{-5} s^{-1}) and vertical velocity (contour, $\text{m} \text{ s}^{-1}$) for triangle 1. (c)
 1345 same as (b), but for the vertical profiles of the vorticity (shaded, 10^{-5} s^{-1}) for triangle 1.

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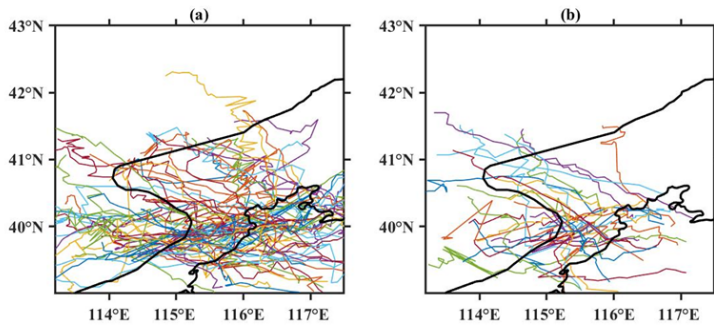
1349 **Figure 10.** (a) The occurrence number (shaded) of reflectivity greater than 35 dBZ
 1350 during downhill thunderstorm events. (b) Scatterplots showing the distribution of the
 1351 initial length-width ratio and area of downhill thunderstorms, with the corresponding
 1352 relative variation of area (shaded, km²). (c) Boxplots showing the distribution of the
 1353 arrival time and downhill duration of **EDSs (red)** and **DDSs (blue)**. The central box
 1354 represents the values from lower to upper quartile (25th–75th percentile), the vertical
 1355 line extends from the 10th to 90th percentile, the solid line denotes the median.

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Figure 11. The trajectories (color shaded curves) of (a) 63 Enhanced Downhill Storms (EDSs) and (b) 32 Dissipated Downhill Storms (DDSs). The bold black curve in the middle marks the ridge line, and the bold black line in the lower right corner marks the plain line that denotes the 200-m terrain elevation.

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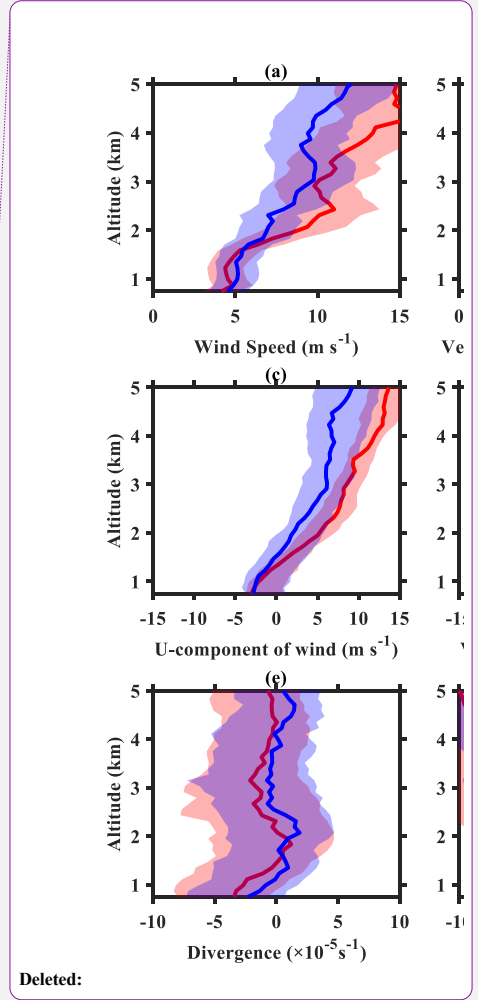
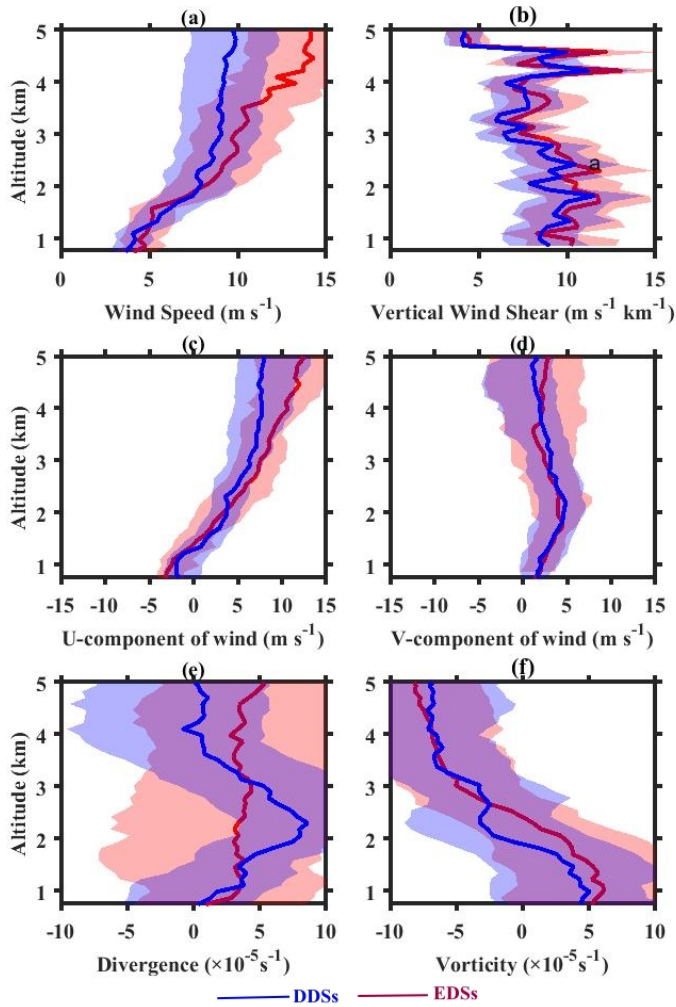
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1385 **Figure 12.** Vertical profiles of (a) wind speed, (b) vertical wind shear, (c) u-component
 1386 of wind, (d) v-component of wind over YQ station in two hours prior to the arrival of
 1387 EDSs (red) and DDSs (blue). (e) and (f) same as the above, except for the divergence
 1388 and vorticity over triangle 1 as shown in Figure 1b derived from the RWP mesonet,
 1389 respectively.

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