

Long-term grazing effects on soil-atmosphere exchanges of CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O at different grasslands in Inner Mongolia: a soil core study

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Abstract

Regional greenhouse gas (GHG) budgets in vast grasslands may be changing due to overgrazing and grassland types. However, the comprehensive effects of grazing patterns, environmental factors and grassland types on soil carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) exchanges have been poorly studied. This study investigates the effects of long-term grazing on the soil-atmosphere exchanges of CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O in important processes within different grasslands in Inner Mongolia, China. Using manual static chamber and gas chromatography, we measured the fluxes of CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O from intact soil cores of paired grazed/ungrazed sites collected from two typical steppes (*Stipa grandis* and *Leymus chinensis*): one wetland in a flood plain and one desert steppe in the region of the Xilin River catchment, Inner Mongolia. Soil gas flux and concentration measurements were conducted in four simulated conditions (*i.e.*, drought, dry-wet, intense rainfall and freeze-thaw), which represent important processes in annual GHG exchanges. Extreme drought significantly inhibited CO₂ and N₂O emissions in all plots but did not change the CH₄ uptake by typical steppes. Dry-wet transition and intense rainfall could remarkably promote soil CO₂ emission pulses at different types, significantly decrease CH₄ uptake by typical steppes, and arouse N₂O emission pulses at all plots with different times of occurrence. During the freeze-thaw simulation, temperature-induced soil CO₂ emission and CH₄ uptake/emission presented a clear alternative variation, while soil thaw only slightly increased ($<15 \mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) in the steppes and sand dunes and was significantly higher in the wetland ($11\text{-}96 \mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$). Long-term grazing significantly inhibited soil respiration rates at all grassland types, significantly decreased CH₄ uptake by the *Leymus chinensis* steppes, and did not show significant influence on N₂O emission due to large spatial variations for all types. Compared to the ungrazed *Leymus* steppes, *Stipa* steppes, sand dune and wetland, continuously grazed sites were significantly reduced by 22%, 38%, 48% and 47% in total GHG emissions, respectively. Our results indicate that the potential of the steppe soil CH₄ sink function can be offset by N₂O emission, especially in over-grazed plots. Furthermore, N₂O emissions should be considered in wetland rangelands with significantly higher N₂O emission potential (range: $0\text{-}343 \mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) more than steppes (range: $0\text{-}132 \mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) and sand dunes (range: $0\text{-}49 \mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$). Nevertheless, comprehensive evaluation of the grazing effect on ecosystem GHG emissions merits consider in both field observation and incubation experiments

50 because soil properties and environmental factors could be changed by vegetation growth in different
51 grazing practices.

52 **Keywords:** greenhouse gas, semiarid grassland, grazing, freeze-thaw, dry-wet, intense rainfall,
53 **Inner Mongolia**

54 **Introduction**

55 Temperate steppes, covering approximately one-tenth of the earth's land surface, play important
56 roles in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or uptake (Sutie *et al.*, 2005). In general, steppe soils serve
57 as a reservoir for large amounts of organic carbon and a sink or source of methane (CH₄) and nitrous
58 oxide (N₂O) (Soussana *et al.*, 2007). The size of sinks or sources in steppe soils is strongly controlled
59 by the physical factors of soil (*e.g.*, texture, organic matter and soil temperature moisture) but also by
60 land uses (*e.g.*, grazing and reclaiming) and climate change (*e.g.*, rainfall and air temperature)
61 (Galbally *et al.*, 2008). Due to the large area and the mitigation potential, clarification of
62 soil-atmosphere exchanges of GHG in temperate steppes is crucial to our understanding of the global
63 C/N cycle and mitigation options.

64 The GHGs (*e.g.*, CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O) are produced or consumed as a result of microbial processes in
65 the soil (Galbally *et al.*, 2008). The soil-atmosphere fluxes of GHGs heavily depends on the physical
66 factors of soil, which affects the microbial processes of production, consumption and gas transport in
67 the soil (Smith *et al.*, 2003). Soil temperature and water content have been reported to be the two
68 most important factors linked to soil GHG fluxes (*e.g.*, Wang *et al.*, 2005; Wang and Fang, 2010).
69 They directly affect production and consumption of GHGs through their effects on microorganisms
70 and root activity. In addition, gas diffusivity, which depends on air-filled porosity (and thus varies
71 inversely with water content), controls the movement of the gases to and from the atmosphere and
72 indirectly controls the capacity of microbial processes by affecting soil aeration. Studies have shown
73 that a large amount of water input during periods of freeze-thaw, dry-wet and intense rainfall could
74 contribute greatly to annual GHG budgets (*e.g.*, Hao *et al.*, 2010; Wolf *et al.*, 2010; Yao *et al.*, 2010).
75 Wolf *et al.* (2010) found that the N₂O pulses during spring thaw dominate the annual N₂O emission
76 in a typical steppe. The function of a carbon sink in the grassland ecosystem may change to the
77 source during extreme dry years (Hao *et al.*, 2010). Soil CH₄ uptake in grasslands have been reported
78 to be sensitive to soil temperature and water content at the seasonal and annual scales (Chen *et al.*,
79 2011). These studies have suggested these temperature- or water-related periods are important in
80 affecting the greenhouse gas exchange mechanisms and regional GHG budgets.

81 At present, most of the grasslands suffer from degradation due to overgrazing and poor management,

82 especially arid and semiarid grassland, where 73% of rangeland is degraded (Steinfeld *et al.*, 2006).
83 Inner Mongolian steppes (approximately 87 million hectare), covering more than 20% of the total
84 grassland area in China, are characterized by a typical temperate semiarid climate (Wang *et al.*,
85 2005). As a major base of animal husbandry, livestock numbers have increased significantly in the
86 past few decades and most natural steppes have been facing the accelerating threats from overgrazing
87 (Tong *et al.* 2004). Overgrazing has resulted in widespread rangeland degradation or desertification
88 of steppes, associated with changes in soil properties (Kang *et al.*, 2008), plant diversity and
89 productivity (Gao *et al.*, 2011) or activities of soil microorganisms (Su *et al.*, 2005). Recently, it was
90 shown that the potential of soils to acts as a sink or source of atmospheric CH₄ or N₂O in steppes
91 may have been reduced significantly if heavily grazed continuously for three years (Wolf *et al.*, 2010;
92 Chen *et al.*, 2011). This indicates that greenhouses gas exchange in steppe ecosystems might have
93 changed significantly with the expansion of degraded grasslands and global warming. Furthermore,
94 these steppe types are characterized by a typical temperate semiarid climate with a significant
95 inter-annual variability (Liu *et al.*, 2008). However, the comprehensive estimate of grazing practices
96 and environmental factor effects on total GHG exchanges during freeze-thaw, dry-wet and intense
97 rainfall periods have been rare until now. In addition to typical steppes, wetland rangelands (*e.g.*,
98 flood plain and river valley meadows) and sand dune rangelands are very valuable grazing places
99 due to plentiful water supply, rich vegetation, special water storage performance or leeward side for
100 winter grazing. However, the grazing effect on GHG emissions from these two types of rangeland
101 has been poorly studied. Thus, both aspects indicate the large uncertainties of these important
102 parameters for regional GHG budgets.

103 The objective of this study is to understand the effects of steppe types, grazing practices and
104 environmental factors on the potential of soil GHG exchanges. Using soil core incubation and gas
105 chromatography methods, we determined the fluxes of CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O from intact soil cores of
106 paired grazed/ungrazed sites collected from two typical steppes (*Stipa grandis* and *Leymus*
107 *chinensis*), one wetland in a flood plain and one desert steppe in the region of the Xilin River
108 catchment of Inner Mongolia. The flux measurements were conducted in four simulated conditions
109 (*i.e.*, dry, dry-wet, intense rainfall and freeze-thaw), which represent important processes in annual
110 GHG exchanges. In addition, soil GHG concentrations at four depths (5, 10, 20 and 30 cm) were
111 selectively measured to further understand soil-atmospheric GHG exchanges. The differences of

112 GHG exchange rates under various combined conditions and possible mechanisms are estimated and
113 discussed.
114

Materials and methods

Study region

The study was conducted in different grassland ecosystems located in the Xilin River catchment near the Inner Mongolia Grassland Ecosystem Research Station (IMGERS, 43°38' N, 116°42' E; 1100 m a.s.l.) of the Chinese Ecosystem Research Network. The local climate is characterized as a temperate continental climate. In this region, the growing season usually starts in early May and ends in late September, and the remaining seven months are the non-growing season, when grass vegetation and roots are dormant. The 25-year mean annual air temperature (1982–2007) recorded by IMGERS was 0.7°C, with a mean January temperature of -21°C and a July mean of 19°C. The annual mean precipitation is 330 mm (range: 166–507 mm yr⁻¹ in 1982–2007), of which 85% falls between May and September. The average air temperature and precipitation values (mostly in snowfall) during the non-growing season were -8.7°C and 52 mm.

The typical steppe covers approximately 85% of the area of the Xilin River catchment. The most common typical steppe types are communities either dominated by *Stipa grandis* or *Leymus chinensis*. The soil types of the *Stipa grandis* and *Leymus chinensis* steppes are *kastanozem* and *chernozem*, respectively. Sand dunes, occupying 6.5% of the study area, are characterized by undulating topography, where sand forms a sequence of depressions and hills. Dense vegetation, particularly *Ulmus pumila* and other tree genera, *i.e.*, *Betulus spp.*, *Malus spp.*, *Prunus spp.* and *Populus spp.* dominate north- to northwest-facing slopes, as well as in depressions. South- to southwest-facing slopes generally have sparser shrubs and grassland vegetation. Wetland covers only a tiny portion of the study area (approximately 0.4%). It borders most of the Xilin River, its tributaries and some flat areas of episodic streams. These areas are divided into two parts: dry and wet marshland. Dry marshland is frequently wet, but it becomes dry during one to three months of the summer. In contrast, wet marshland is wet all year round. However, wet marshland has also been noted to dry out during years with low summer rainfall (approximately 100 mm). The vegetation found in these areas consists mainly of marshland species such as *Phragmites australis*, *Carex appendiculata*, *Iris lactea var. chinensis* and *Hippuris vulgaris*.

Soil core sampling

Grazing practices (or stocking rate) and grassland type are indicators of soil GHG emissions or uptake in grasslands. It is crucial to consider these two indicators to find the best balance point in grassland quality and GHG emissions, and then select suitable grazing patterns for local grassland management. Paired experimental rangelands or plots under ungrazed and grazing practices in the Xilin River catchment were established by IMGERS. To determine the long-term grazing effect on the potential of soil GHG exchanges, four paired plots were chosen, including one plot that has remained ungrazed since 1979 (SUG79), and an adjacent, continuously grazed rangeland (SCG) at *Stipa grandis* steppe; one plot that has remained ungrazed since 1979 (LUG79) and an adjacent, continuously grazed rangeland (LCG) at the *Leymus chinensis* steppe; one plot that has remained ungrazed since 1989 (WUG89) and an adjacent, continuously grazed rangeland (WCG) in the Xilin river flood wetland; and one plot that has remained ungrazed since 2002 (SDUG02) and an adjacent, continuously grazed rangeland (SDCG) in a sand dune place near IMGERS. The paired plots have similar backgrounds regarding soil and vegetation characteristics. Animals (sheep and goats) could walk freely during the grazing seasons in all grazed plots. All long-term fenced plots had significantly higher values in vegetation height, coverage and plant density, compared to adjacent grazed rangelands. Detailed location, grassland managements and soil properties at paired ungrazed and grazed grasslands are shown in Table 1.

Soil core sampling at the paired plots in four types of grasslands was conducted on September 20, 2008. The grass above ground were cut off to near the ground surface before sampling. At each plot or rangeland, undisturbed soil cores at a depth of 0–40 cm were taken in quintuplicates using specialized semi-column steel pipe and were put in manual chambers. Manual chambers were made from nontransparent polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe (diameter, 16 cm; length, 60 cm; volume, 4.0 L; basal area, 0.02 m²) with a twist lid and a bottom (PVC) with a butyl rubber septum and a rubber O ring to form a gas-tight seal. After drying in the shade, all soil core samples were brought to the laboratory at the Institute of Meteorology and Climate Research - Atmospheric Environmental Research (IMK-IFU), Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and stored in dry conditions and well aerated at 4°C for further analysis.

Experimental design of soil core incubation

Gas fluxes and soil gas concentrations were measured using the sampled soil core in manual chambers and gas chromatography techniques under different stimulated dry-wet, intense rainfall, freeze and thaw cycles. We conducted undisturbed soil core incubation and these measurements for each grassland type in sequence and the detailed steps as follows:

- 1) **Soil activation.** More than ten months in storage [has](#) resulted in completely dry soil cores, thus we activated soil cores by adding a simulated 15 mm rainfall event before starting the measurement. Standard rain mixture included 11 mg CaCl_2 , 24.4 mg KCl, and 18.6 mg Na_2SO_4 in 1000 mL of distilled water.
- 2) **Drought simulation.** After activation, all soil cores were placed at room temperature for approximately 40 days until topsoil of soil cores was completely dried. Then, we put all soil cores in electronic controlled incubators, which can regulate air temperature, and kept the air temperature at 20°C. Fluxes of CO_2 , CH_4 and N_2O were measured for three days during the simulated drought condition. Hereafter, the rainfall simulation and flux measurement were conducted in the incubator at room temperature.
- 3) **Dry-wet cycle simulation.** After the flux measurement under the simulated drought condition, we added 20 mm of rainfall water solution to the simulated dry-wet process. Then, GHG fluxes were continuously measured for seven to eight days [until](#) the flux variations tended to be stable. The topsoil moisture at the end time was approximately 10%-20%, which was similar to the normal values during the growing season in the grassland (mean: 15%).
- 4) **Intense rainfall simulation.** The 20 mm simulated rainfall solution was added to the soil core to [simulate](#) an intense rainfall event, aiming to evaluate the difference between grazed and ungrazed soil affected by intense rainfall in different grassland types. Similar GHG flux measurements were continuously conducted for seven to eight days until the flux was nearly stable.
- 5) **Freeze-thaw simulation.** In the steppes and sand dune, precipitation was generally small before the winter, so the topsoil moisture during the whole freeze period was low. In the following year, during snow melt and soil thawing, melted water from snow permeated into soil with air temperature increases. Soils were frozen at low temperatures, and the freeze-thaw cycle transition

occurred each day. Although soil water content mainly depends on the river flood situation, we used the same simulated condition to keep pace with other types. After completion of the second rainfall simulation and flux measurement, we removed all soil cores from incubators and kept them at room temperature until soil moisture was approximately 5%. This was to create a similar soil condition with that of the real field environment. Then, soil cores were put into freezers for 20 days to simulate the freeze period, and soil flux measurements were conducted in the end of this period. In the next step, soil cores were set into an incubator and regulated to the simulated temperature of 5°C, which was close to the actual temperature in the beginning of the spring-thaw period. We added 20 mm of rainfall water solution to simulate the penetration into soil from snow melted water. Four hours later, we measured the GHG fluxes from soil cores during the simulated thaw period. In addition, they were then put into freezers with a temperature of -10°C for 23-24 hours, and GHG fluxes were measured GHG fluxes, which represented the freeze process. In the following 10-12 days, the simulation of freeze (-10°C) and thaw (5°C) were transformed for the GHG flux measurement every day.

Measurements of GHG fluxes and soil gas GHG concentrations

The fluxes of CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O were measured using a static chamber method. The PVC tubes (soil cores) were sealed with stainless steel lids, enclosing a headspace of ~2 L. The lids were equipped with a circulating fan to ensure complete gas mixing. In addition, they had two ports, one with a septum for gas sampling and the other holding a Teflon tube (with an outer diameter of 1/8 inches and a length of 20 cm) to ensure the equilibration of air pressure between the inside and outside. A 20 mL gas sample was taken with a gas-tight syringe from the headspace immediately after sealing and again after 15, 30, 45, and 60 min. The air samples stored in the syringes were analyzed by gas chromatography (SRI 8610C, Texas Instruments, Torrance, CA, USA), which was equipped with an electron capture detector (ECD) for N₂O analysis and a flame ionization detector for CH₄ and CO₂ analysis. The CO₂ was converted to CH₄ in a methanizer prior to analysis. The analytical conditions for analyzing the concentrations of CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O and the methods for calculating the fluxes of each gas have been described by Holst *et al.* (2007) and Zheng *et al.* (2008). We used a purge gas (CO₂: N₂ = 10:90) for the ECD at a rate of 1–3 mL min⁻¹ to avoid cross-interference between CO₂ and N₂O in the air samples. The gas fluxes were calculated from changes in the initial rate of

concentration change within the chambers' headspace; this was calculated from the initial slope of a non-linear regression of concentration against time (Kroon *et al.*, 2008). Negative flux values indicate gas uptake from the atmosphere, and positive flux values indicate gas emissions to the atmosphere. The detection limits for our approach were $1.5\mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$ for N_2O , $4\mu\text{g C m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$ for CH_4 and $1\text{ mg C m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$ for CO_2 based on the chamber dimensions, the sampling time, and the reproducibility of repeated measurements for standard gases (0.7% for CH_4 , 0.8% for CO_2 and 0.6% for N_2O). To assess the grazing effect on the total GHG balance of steppes, we converted CH_4 and N_2O emissions into CO_2 equivalents ($\text{CO}_2\text{-eq.}$) using the global warming potential factors of 25 (for CH_4) and 298 (for N_2O) (IPCC, 2007).

Soil gas samples were taken from each soil core with a stainless-steel tube (inner diameter: 1 mm) near the surface of the soil cores and at 5, 10, 20, and 30 cm depth during the period of gas flux measurements. Ten milliliters of soil gas were collected every two days, and the CO_2 , CH_4 and N_2O concentrations were analyzed using gas chromatography (SRI 8610C, Texas Instruments, Torrance, CA, USA). The detection method was the same as that described above for the gas flux measurement. In addition, among five soil cores, four soil cores were used for GHG flux measurements, and the other one was synchronously incubated to measure topsoil volumetric content (0–6 cm) by a portable FDR probe (ThetaKit, Delta-T Devices, Cambridge, UK).

Statistical analysis

The significance of differences in mean GHG flux and $\text{CO}_2\text{-eq.}$ emissions among the treatments was investigated using a one-way ANOVA with Tukey's HSD test (SPSS 11.5, SPSS Inc., Chicago, USA). All plots (line, bar and contour) were made using SigmaPlot 10.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, USA).

Results

Soil properties

At the *Leymus* and *Stipa* steppes, long-term grazing significantly reduced topsoil (0-5 cm) bulk density, the contents of total carbon, nitrogen and silt (Table 1). Although grazing duration was much less than the steppes, there were also obvious decreasing trends in bulk density, pH and silt contents at the sand dune rangelands under heavy grazing practices. The wetland plots with long-term and moderate grazing did not change soil bulk density and pH but significantly reduced total carbon and nitrogen content and increased the silt content of the topsoil.

Carbon dioxide fluxes and concentrations

The CO₂ fluxes ranged from 0 to 92 mg C m⁻² h⁻¹ in the steppes, from 0 to 110 mg C m⁻² h⁻¹ at the sand dune rangeland and from 1 to 79 mg C m⁻² h⁻¹ at the wetland during the whole incubation period (Fig. 1). All investigated plots had similar varying trends of CO₂ emissions under simulated dry, dry-wet, intense rainfall and freeze-thaw periods (Fig. 1). The weak CO₂ emissions (<10 mg C m⁻² h⁻¹) were determined at investigated plots, except WUG89 under the extreme dry period. The following two simulated rainfall events substantially promoted the CO₂ fluxes in the first day after watering and gradually decreased to stable levels; the CO₂ fluxes showed the alternative changes of “low-high-low” with simulated freeze and thaw practices, but the fluxes in freeze-thaw were significantly lower than those in dry-wet and intense rainfall processes.

In the steppe and sand dune rangelands, soil CO₂ concentrations greatly varied during dry, dry-wet, intense rainfall, and freeze-thaw periods (Fig. 4a-4c). Slightly higher soil CO₂ concentrations (400-500 ppmv) than ambient CO₂ concentrations during the dry period indicates low CO₂ emissions, whereas two simulated rainfall events (*i.e.*, dry-wet and intense rainfall practices) rapidly promoted soil CO₂ production with high concentrations (steppes: 1000-1500 ppmv; sand dune: 5000-7000 ppmv). Although soil CO₂ concentrations (< 1000 ppmv) were obviously lower than simulated dry-wet and intense rainfall events, the significant differences of CO₂ concentrations were determined between simulated frozen and thaw periods. In contrast to other rangeland types, we observed the continuously higher soil CO₂ concentrations (2000-6000 ppmv) at the depth of 20-30 cm in the wetland throughout all periods except the freeze-thaw period. Simulated rainfall increased

the topsoil (5-15 cm) CO₂ concentrations, but the increased ranges were far lower than other types. Compared with the lowest soil moisture condition (*i.e.*, 5%), the CO₂ fluxes in the steppe and sand dune rangelands substantially increased under the conditions of 12.5% and 20% with no significant differences between them (Fig. 7a). At the wetland, CO₂ fluxes gradually increased with the increase in soil moisture from 5% to 20% and had significant differences between 5% and 20%. In addition, the mean CO₂ flux under the 10°C condition (*i.e.*, 20.5 mg C m⁻² h⁻¹) was approximately 3-13 times of that with -10°C (Fig. 7d). Our results clearly exhibited that grazing practices significantly reduced soil CO₂ fluxes by 25%-47% in all rangeland types (Fig. 8a). Using the data under all simulated conditions in all rangeland types, soil CO₂ fluxes followed the order: wetland (28 mg C m⁻² h⁻¹) > sand dune (25 mg C m⁻² h⁻¹) > steppe (22 mg C m⁻² h⁻¹).

Methane fluxes and concentrations

All steppe and sand dune rangelands were CH₄ sinks with the fluxes varying from -3 to -59 µg C m⁻² h⁻¹, while wetland rangelands were shifted between weak sinks or sources (-13~13 µg C m⁻² h⁻¹) of atmospheric CH₄ under various conditions (Fig. 2). The CH₄ exchange responses to simulated dry, dry-wet and intense rainfall were quite different among the steppe, sand dune and wetland rangelands. At *Leymus* and *Stipa* steppes, soil had the strongest CH₄ uptake (-40~-60 µg C m⁻² h⁻¹) under the extreme dry condition, a fast decrease in the first day after simulated rainfall and gradually increased to a similar level as the dry period in the following days. Compared with steppes, the variation range of CH₄ fluxes (-2~-25 µg C m⁻² h⁻¹) in the sand dune were smaller and the maximum of CH₄ uptake occurred at the end of simulated intense rainfall. At the wetland rangelands, soils were very weak CH₄ sinks (-1~-4 µg C m⁻² h⁻¹) under dry conditions, and then were shifted to weak sources (< 13 µg C m⁻² h⁻¹) at WUG89 after simulated rainfall. During the freeze-thaw period, although the CH₄ fluxes also switched to “low-high-low” pattern (Fig. 2), the flux levels were comparable with other periods.

Under all simulated conditions, soil CH₄ concentrations decreased with the increase in soil depth in the investigated plots except for WUG89 after intense rainfall (Fig. 5), which was consistent with the shift of the soil CH₄ sink and source. Soil CH₄ concentrations in the steppes and sand dune had clear gradual gradients in different depths during the dry period, and quickly decreased after simulated rainfall, especially in deep soil (< 1 ppmv). Compared with the steppes and sand dune, the ranges of

decreasing gradient were much smaller in the wetland rangelands, and soil CH₄ concentrations were close to ambient concentrations after simulated intense rainfall. During the freeze-thaw period, the small differences of CH₄ concentrations in soil depths occurred with simulated freeze conditions, while the large ranges occurred with the thaw simulation.

The CH₄ uptake in the *Leymus* steppe did not greatly vary (42–46 μg C m⁻² h⁻¹) among moistures of 5%, 12.5% and 20%, but they gradually decreased in *Stipa* steppes with increasing moisture (Fig. 7b). Opposite of the steppes, the CH₄ uptake in the sand dune showed the positive trend with the increase in moisture. In addition, the average CH₄ fluxes in wetland plots fluctuated around zero in three moisture conditions with no significant differences. With the change of air temperature from -10°C to 10°C, the CH₄ uptake increased from 27 to 38 μg C m⁻² h⁻¹ in the *Leymus* steppe, from -11 to 30 μg C m⁻² h⁻¹ in the *Stipa* steppe, and from 4 to 20 μg C m⁻² h⁻¹ in the sand dune, showing the substantial effect by temperature. In contrast to the CO₂ fluxes, we determined that only long-term grazing significantly reduced CH₄ uptake by 37% in the *Leymus* steppe. Among all rangelands, soil CH₄ uptake was highest in the *Leymus* and *Stipa* steppes (> 30 μg C m⁻² h⁻¹), followed by the sand dune (~ 13 μg C m⁻² h⁻¹) and lowest in the wetlands (Fig. 8b).

Nitrous oxide fluxes and concentrations

The range of N₂O fluxes from steppes, sand dunes and wetlands were 0-132, 0-49 and 0-343 μg N m⁻² h⁻¹ (Fig. 3). Under extreme dry conditions, wetlands were weak N₂O sources with an average flux of 14.5 μg N m⁻² h⁻¹, while the N₂O fluxes were nearly 0 in other types. The first simulated rainfall aroused N₂O emissions at all rangelands with the peak occurring in the first or second day and gradually decreasing in the following days. Similarly, the second simulated rainfall (*i.e.*, intense rainfall) substantially promoted N₂O emissions with higher fluxes at all rangelands except the sand dunes (Fig. 3). The *Leymus* steppes and sand dunes had only a quick N₂O peak on the first day, but the N₂O peaks in the *Stipa* steppes and wetlands occurred on the third and fifth days with higher N₂O emissions. During freeze-thaw cycles, N₂O fluxes were nearly 0 under freeze conditions and slightly increased (< 15 μg N m⁻² h⁻¹) with the thaw practices in the steppes and sand dunes. Although the wetlands had similar variation patterns of “low-high-low” with the simulated freeze and thaw practices, the N₂O emissions (11-96 μg N m⁻² h⁻¹) were significantly higher than other types.

Soil N₂O concentrations in the steppe and sand dune rangelands were close to ambient N₂O

concentrations (~330 ppbv) at the extreme dry condition and quickly increased to 500-1036 ppbv following the first rainfall in the dry-wet cycle, indicating the production of N₂O. The second rainfall also increased the soil N₂O concentrations in the steppe rangelands, and had the maximum (2623 ppbv). Soil N₂O concentrations in the wetlands gradually increased with the first and second rainfall events and reached the maximum of 20401 ppbv. Simulated soil freeze and thaw cycles presented the pattern “low-high-low”, with significant promotion in the steppe rangelands. Compared to the steppe and sand dune, the wetland kept a continuously high soil N₂O concentration, showing a stronger N₂O production.

In the steppe and wetland rangelands, soil N₂O emissions gradually increased with the moisture increase, from 5% to 20%, while N₂O emissions remained at continuously low levels at the sand dune rangeland under all moisture conditions (Fig. 7c). The increased ranges of soil N₂O fluxes were substantial at the *Stipa* steppe (2-83 $\mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) and the wetland (10-220 $\mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) rangelands. Compared with the frozen temperature (-10°C), the N₂O emissions had increasing trends at all rangelands, but we only determined significant differences of N₂O emissions at the *Stipa* steppes. Furthermore, the increasing ranges of soil N₂O emissions were significantly less under the two temperature conditions than that which occurred in the different moisture conditions.

Total soil GHG emissions

The average emissions of soil GHG (*i.e.*, CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O) were 83.1, 97.2, 95.5 and 14.4 tons CO₂ eq. ha⁻¹ in the investigated *Leymus* steppes, *Stipa* steppes, sand dune and wetland rangelands, respectively. Of the total GWPs of soil GHG emissions, CO₂ emission, CH₄ uptake/emission and N₂O emission had average contributions of 97.7%, -1.6% and 3.9% in the *Leymus* steppes and 84.7%, -1.1% and 16.4% in the *Stipa* steppes. Sand dune rangelands had similar contributions (CO₂: 97.2%; CH₄: -0.5%; N₂O: 3.3%) to the *Leymus* steppes. Significantly different from other types, the wetland rangelands had higher N₂O shares (28.4%) in total GHG emissions, where CO₂ emissions accounted for 71.5% and the CH₄ contribution could be ignored. These results indicate that the total soil GHG emissions were dominated by CO₂ emissions in the *Leymus* steppe and sand dune rangelands and that the grazing effect on the soil GHG emissions was dependent on CO₂ changes. Nevertheless, the net CO₂ exchanges should also consider CO₂ uptake by plant photosynthesis, thus the roles of N₂O and CH₄ will be increased. Compared to the ungrazed *Leymus* steppes (*i.e.*, LUG79), the *Stipa*

363 steppes (*i.e.*, SUG79) and sand dune (*i.e.*, SDUG02), both continuously grazed sites, were
364 significantly reduced by 22%, 38% and 48% in total GHG emissions, respectively (Table 1).
365 Furthermore, these results also indicate that the potential of steppe soil as a CH₄ sink function can be
366 offset by the N₂O emission, especially in over-grazed plots, due to the significant reduction of the
367 soil CH₄ sink and enhancement of the potential of soil N₂O sources. In contrast, N₂O emissions
368 should be considered in the wetland rangelands, as grazing has reduced GHG emissions by 47%.

Discussion

Carbon dioxide

Soil CO₂ emission rates (0–110 mg C m⁻² h⁻¹) under different conditions at the investigated rangelands were comparable with the reported fluxes (1–198 mg C m⁻² h⁻¹) in the Eurasia steppes (*e.g.*, Cui *et al.*, 2000; Jia *et al.*, 2007; Wang *et al.*, 2007; Chen *et al.*, 2013; Gong *et al.*, 2014) and North America prairies (*e.g.*, Bremer *et al.*, 1998; Zhou *et al.*, 2006; Casasovas *et al.*, 2012). A large number of studies have shown that soil respiration rates are closely linked to surface soil temperature and moisture (Howard and Howard, 1993). Generally, high temperature and appropriate water conditions can greatly promote soil respiration, and conversely, soil respiration can be inhibited in low temperature and low water supply conditions. In addition, the high water supply causes soil surface water saturation, which can also weaken the soil respiration rate. In our study, under simulated drought conditions, soil respiration rates from all types of grassland were weak, mainly due to a severe lack of water to reduce the microbial activity, thereby reducing the microbial regulation of isotonic respiration (Nakano *et al.*, 2008.). There was some soil respiration in the wetland under the dry condition, which was mainly caused by CO₂ generation from the underlying soil by the wetting and CO₂ diffusion of the surface soil. Rainfall can affect soil respiration by influencing the biological activity of the soil and the amount of water required for root growth (Reference). In arid ecosystems or dry-wet transition seasons, rainfall events can strongly arouse soil respiration (Jia *et al.*, 2006; Hao *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, this phenomenon also appears in our study, with the appearance of a quick CO₂ emission pulse after each rainfall event. In arid or semiarid ecosystems, soil respiration has a positive correlation with water content that is below the saturated water content of the soil. Our study shows that, except for sand dunes, the surface soil moisture content after the second rainfall at the other three types of grassland were higher than the first after the rainfall, and the soil respiration after second rainfall is higher than the first time. Under frozen conditions, soil respiration rates were very weak, since very low temperature greatly inhibited the activity of soil microbes. When the soil was thawed, the surface soil temperature was recovered and therefore promoted the recovery of microbial activity. However, the soil respiration intensity was still weak compared to that under the 20°C condition because the soil temperature and microbial activity had a significant positive correlation.

Many studies have shown that overgrazing will reduce soil respiration in semiarid grassland soils, mainly because excessive grazing greatly reduces the substrate organic carbon of soil heterotrophic respiration and attenuates the autotrophic respiration of the underground part of a plant (Wang and Fang, 2010). For management of low grazing intensity, it is generally believed that the growth of plant roots underground will be promoted to increase soil respiration (Chen *et al.*, 2011). Thus, in the grazing tests with low grazing intensities, there was no significant difference or significant increase in soil respiration compared with the ungrazed site. In this study, all four selected types of grassland including a long-forbidden grazing plot, a long-term continuous grazing rangeland and long-term grazing have significantly changed the grassland vegetation and soil characteristics. Our incubation experiments showed that grazing had little effect on the soil respiration rate under the conditions of drought and freeze-thaw in all grass types because the activity of soil microbes in the ungrazed and grazing areas was strongly inhibited. However, long-term continuous grazing significantly reduced the soil respiration rate under appropriate temperature and rainfall conditions, which indicates that soil carbon, nitrogen and microbial activity reduction caused by grazing were only manifested under appropriate hydrothermal conditions.

Methane

Negative CH₄ fluxes from soil core incubation indicate the uptake is by steppes, which are consistent with field measurements in this region (Wang *et al.*, 2005; Liu *et al.*, 2007; Chen *et al.*, 2011). The CH₄ uptake rates (3–59 µg C m⁻²) in the investigated steppes fall into a range of different ecosystems in arid and semiarid regions (2–105 µg C m⁻² h⁻¹), including deserts, prairies, croplands and steppes (*e.g.*, Mosier *et al.*, 1996; Galbally *et al.*, 2008; Chen *et al.*, 2011). The results of our experiments showed that typical steppes and sand dune grasslands still obviously absorbed the CH₄ in the atmosphere under the very dry condition of the surface soil. Before the start of incubation experiments, we added 15 mm of water to activate the soil microbes, which would be more likely to penetrate deeper into the soil in the arid soil cores. Thus, after more than a month of evaporation, although the surface soil moisture content has been very low (< 5% v/v) and the activity of CH₄ oxidizing bacteria was very low at the surface, the atmospheric CH₄ can also be diffused to the more humid soil and then oxidized. In the first day after the simulated rainfall, soil surface gas diffusion reduced CH₄ diffusion from atmosphere to the soil due to a large amount of water input, so there

427 appeared to be short and weak CH₄ absorption, and CH₄ absorption gradually increased followed by
428 the surface soil water evaporation. These change characteristics were more obvious in typical steppes
429 than other types. Because the soil texture is loose and the water permeability is better, the input of
430 water was transferred to the deep soil over time, and the surface soil did not accumulate a large
431 amount of water to affect the soil diffusion. Thus the response of the CH₄ absorption to the rainfall in
432 the sand dune rangeland may not be sensitive. For soil cores collected from wetlands, these soils
433 have been in place for nearly a year and the surface soil had been very dry when we started
434 measurements. However, the soils in the lower part (20-40 cm) remain moist. At this time, the
435 wetland soil can be considered a natural grassland soil after the river water retreated. The CH₄ flux
436 was almost zero, meaning there was a balance between soil CH₄ emission and absorption. Our
437 simulated 20 mm rainfall looks as though it is not enough to change this situation. The alteration of
438 CH₄ uptake in typical steppes and sand dune rangeland was also obvious under freezing and thawing
439 conditions due to the large alteration of temperature (-10° C and 10° C). This mainly accounted for
440 the change of microbial activity in the surface soil, which influenced CH₄ absorption (Chen *et al.*,
441 2011). Generally, when the soil temperature is lower than -5° C, the activity of soil CH₄ oxidizing
442 bacterial will be greatly reduced (Smith *et al.*, 2000).

443 The order of CH₄ uptake rates in the different types of grassland was *Leymus chinensis* steppe ≥
444 *Stipa Grandis* steppe > Sand dune > Wetland. For the typical steppe, the results showed that the
445 grazing significantly inhibited the CH₄ uptake by the *Leymus chinensis* steppe, which was consistent
446 with the field observation (Liu *et al.*, 2007; Chen *et al.*, 2011). Severe grazing significantly reduced
447 the annual CH₄ uptake, mainly due to the remarkable decrease in surface soil gas permeability.
448 Although we did not detect the gas permeability of the soil cores during the incubation periods, the
449 soil bulk density (0.99 g cm⁻³) of the long-term grazing in the *Leymus chinensis* steppe was higher
450 than that of the forbidden grazing area (0.87 g cm⁻³), which may also suggest that the gas
451 permeability of the grazing rangeland was low. However, the soil bulk density (1.24 g cm⁻³) was also
452 significantly higher than that of the forbidden grazing plot (1.06 g cm⁻³), but we did not detect the
453 significant effect of grazing on the *Stipa grandis* steppe. This suggests that in addition to the gas
454 permeability reduction, the reducing soil microbial activity by vegetation changes and induced
455 environmental factors (*e.g.*, soil temperature and moisture) was also important for the grazing

456 reduction effect on CH₄ uptake by the *Stipa grandis* steppe.

457 The soil CH₄ sink function of the two types of typical steppes was significantly higher than that in
458 the sand dune and wetland rangelands ($p < 0.05$). Most of sand dune areas used for grazing are
459 formed by overgrazing or reclamation in a typical grassland. The grass coverage on the sand dune
460 rangeland is very sparse, and the microbial activity in the soil was significantly lower than that of the
461 typical steppes. The sand dune rangelands can be regarded as typical steppes under extreme
462 overgrazing conditions; therefore, CH₄ uptake capacity of sand dune rangelands were significantly
463 lower than that of the typical steppes (Chen *et al.*, 2013). For the seven years of forbidden sand dune
464 rangelands, although vegetation has been restored, our incubation experiment indicates that the soil
465 CH₄ sink capacity has not been improved. This result may be different from field observations in
466 view of the effects of vegetation alone on the activity of soil microorganisms or the changing
467 environmental factors (*e.g.*, soil temperature and moisture). However, for degraded grasslands or
468 sand dunes under excessive grazing practices, there is still large uncertainty as to whether the CH₄
469 sink capacity could be restored to natural grassland or how long it will take to recover. Mosier *et al.*
470 (1997) found that the soil CH₄ oxidation rate was only one-third that of the natural grassland when
471 the arable land was converted into grassland for 50 years. Smith *et al.* (2000) considered the CH₄
472 oxidation rate when the original grass was reclaimed or fertilized and found that the recovery was
473 slow and takes more than 100 years to recover to the CH₄ absorption rate before interference.

474 In addition, our incubation experiment suggests that the seasonal river floodplain wetland did not
475 function as a CH₄ sink after river water retreat, and grazing had no significant effect on the weak
476 absorption or discharge of CH₄. This means that with the depletion or reduction of grassland water
477 resources, the wetland soil was the only weak source or sink and can be ignored in the regional CH₄
478 budget. For the flood plain, when the river flows over the surface of the wetlands, the wetlands are a
479 strong source of atmospheric CH₄. In addition, Hirota *et al.* (2005) have reported that grazing can
480 reduce CH₄ emissions from alpine wetlands in the short term by affecting the ventilation of aquatic
481 plants. Although some CH₄ emission observations were carried out in the Inner Mongolia floodplain
482 wetlands, most of them were on grazing wetlands. For grazed and ungrazed comparisons, there was
483 little research to understand the impact of grazing on CH₄ emissions from floodplains, which would
484 also help to estimate regional CH₄ budget.

Nitrous oxide

The N₂O emission rates from the soil core incubation of steppes (0-132 $\mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) and sand dunes (0-49 $\mu\text{g N m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$) fall in the range of field measurements (Mosier *et al.*, 1996; Wang *et al.*, 2005; Wolf *et al.*, 2010). Many studies have shown that soil N₂O emissions are positively correlated with soil moisture (Mosier *et al.*, 1996; Steffens *et al.*, 2008). In our study, the N₂O emissions of the three types of grassland under drought conditions were weak. Insufficient water supply would reduce the activity of microorganisms during nitrification and denitrification, resulting in a decrease in soil N₂O production. In general, heavy rainfall during the wet and dry transition process will stimulate the N₂O pulses, which are reflected in many field observations and indoor experiments (*e.g.*, Teepe *et al.*, 2004; Holst *et al.*, 2008; Yao *et al.*, 2010). We found that, in addition to the *Leymus chinensis* steppe, there was a N₂O emission pulse in the other three types of grassland in the short term after rainfall, especially after continuous rainfall. The surface soil moisture content will be greatly increased, which greatly improved the nitrification and denitrification process by providing hydrothermal conditions to increase the amount of soil N₂O production. The N₂O emissions were greatly reduced during the freeze-thaw conditions compared to the field snowmelt period. This may due to the large consumption of soil substrate in N₂O production during two rainfall simulations and to relatively low temperatures that inhibit microbial activity. Because the texture of the surface soil was relatively loose at the typical steppes and sand dunes, the rainfall water was easy to penetrate the deep soil; therefore, the surface soil moisture was easily evaporated to reduce the water conditions of soil N₂O production. The surface soil density of the *Stipa grandis* steppe was 0.2 g cm^{-3} higher than that of the *Leymus chinensis* steppe. Therefore, the soil moisture in the topsoil was easy to accumulate after rainfall and formed a high humidity condition, which was beneficial to the production of soil N₂O. The wetland soils in the flood plains were wetter at the deeper depth. After wetting, the wetland soil had a strong water retention capacity and provided a high humidity condition. Moreover, wetland soil can provide more organic substrate, so the wetland soil N₂O emissions should be much higher than the other three types.

The order of soil N₂O emission rate of different types of grassland was Wetland > *Stipa Grandis* steppe > Sand dune > *Leymus chinensis* steppe. In general, long-term grazing affects the bulk density and porosity of the surface soil, which could easily form an anaerobic zone to increase the N₂O

emission potentials under rainfall conditions (Steffens *et al.*, 2008). In addition, sheep feces in heavily grazed plots were obviously greater than in other soil cores. Thus, through leaching with rainfall, animal feces nutrients may provide more reaction substrates for soil denitrification bacteria. However, in the four types of grasslands surveyed, we did not find that grazing had a significant effect on the soil N₂O emissions. Soil N₂O emission has high spatial heterogeneity, and the variation coefficient of emissions between different soil cores were as high as 80%-290% (Fig. 3), especially in the wetland. In the undisturbed soil we collected, the surface area of the soil column was only 0.02 m², and the height of gas collection in soil cores was 10 cm. This may result in large differences in hydrothermal conditions or soil organic carbon and nitrogen content in the microenvironment and thus affect the soil N₂O production. Therefore, it is important to improve the spatial distribution of N₂O emission in different grassland types and to increase the number of spatial samples, which plays an important role in the accurate detection of the impact of grazing management on the N₂O emission in grasslands.

Conclusions

All steppe and sand dune rangelands were CH₄ sinks ($-3\sim-59\text{ }\mu\text{g C m}^{-2}\text{ h}^{-1}$), while wetland rangelands were shifted between weak sinks or sources ($-13\sim13\text{ }\mu\text{g C m}^{-2}\text{ h}^{-1}$) under various conditions. The order of CH₄ uptake rate of different types of grassland is *Leymus chinensis* Steppe $\geq$ *Stipa grandis* steppe > Sand dune > Wetland. Wetland showed significantly higher N₂O emission potential (range: $0\sim343\text{ }\mu\text{g N m}^{-2}\text{ h}^{-1}$) than the steppes (range: $0\sim132\text{ }\mu\text{g N m}^{-2}\text{ h}^{-1}$) and sand dune (range: $0\sim49\text{ }\mu\text{g N m}^{-2}\text{ h}^{-1}$). The order of soil CO₂ emission in the four types of forbidden grazing sites was Wetland > Sand dune > steppes, but there was no statistically significant difference considering both grazed and ungrazed sites. Grazing significantly reduced the soil respiration rate of different types of soils and only significantly inhibited the absorption of CH₄ in *Leymus chinensis* steppe; we did not find a significant effect on soil N₂O emissions. Compared to the ungrazed *Leymus* steppes, *Stipa* steppes, sand dune and wetland, continuously grazed sites were significantly reduced by 22%, 38%, 48% and 47% in total GHG emissions, respectively. Our study found the potential of the steppe soil CH₄ sink function can be offset by N₂O emission, especially during overgrazing practices, which indicates a net GHG budget might mainly depend on the net CO₂ exchange. In addition, N₂O emissions in wetland rangelands during dry periods should be considered in the regional N₂O budget due to the higher emission potential. However, it is important to comprehensively consider results from both field observation and incubation experiments to evaluate the grazing effect on ecosystem GHG emissions because soil properties and environmental factors could be changed by vegetation growth in the field.

552 **Acknowledgements**

553 This work was supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (41375152,
554 41775116), the MAGIM project of the German Research Foundation (DFG, Research Unit No. 536),
555 and the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology (2010CB951801). Additional supports were
556 provided by the Helmholtz-CSC (China Scholarship Council) program and the Helmholtz-CAS joint
557 laboratory project (ENTRANCE). We also thank the staff of IAP, IB, IMK-IFU, and MAGIM for
558 their support in field experiments.

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664 **List of Tables**

665 **Table 1** Grassland managements and soil properties at paired ungrazed and grazed grasslands in Inner Mongolia

Grassland type	Site code	Location	Management	Stocking rate (sheep ha ⁻¹ yr ⁻¹)	Bulk density (g cm ⁻³)	pH	Total C (mg g ⁻¹)	Total N (mg g ⁻¹)	CaCO ₃ (mg g ⁻¹)	Sand (%)	Silt (%)	Clay (%)
<i>Stipa grandis</i> steppe	SUG79	N 43°32'32"	Ungrazed	0	1.06 ^{cd}	7.5 ^a	1.54 ^d	0.22 ^b	0.1	60.3	31.3	8.4
		E 116°40'15"	since 1979									
	SCG	N 43°32'22"	Continuously	2.34	1.24 ^b	6.9 ^b	1.22 ^e	0.17 ^c	0.1	62.4	28.1	9.5
		E 116°40'01"	grazed									
<i>Leymus chinensis</i> steppe	LUG79	N 43°33'10"	Ungrazed	0	0.87 ^e	6.9 ^b	1.63 ^d	0.19 ^{bc}	0	73.5	17.3	9.2
		E 116°40'27"	since 1979									
	LCG	N 43°33'05"	Continuously	2.05	1.00 ^{cd}	6.7 ^b	0.51 ^f	0.07 ^d	0	86.7	9.5	3.8
		E 116°40'54"	grazed									
Sand dune	SDUG02	N 43°37'57"	Ungrazed	0	0.98 ^d	7.4 ^a	2.20 ^b	0.33 ^a	0.1	80.5	14.2	5.3
		E 116°42'04"	since 2002									
	SDCG	N 43°38'01"	Continuously	1.56	1.45 ^a	6.7 ^b	2.14 ^{bc}	0.25 ^{ab}	0.2	92.4	4.6	3.0
		E 116°41'47"	grazed									
Wetland	WUG89	N 43°37'39"	Ungrazed	0	1.11 ^c	6.7 ^b	2.57 ^a	0.24 ^b	0.9	45.7	49.4	4.9
		E 116°41'13"	since 1989									
	WCG	N 43°37'09"	Continuously	1.32	1.14 ^c	6.7 ^b	1.90 ^{cd}	0.16 ^c	0.1	51.6	39.0	9.4
		E 116°41'12"	grazed									

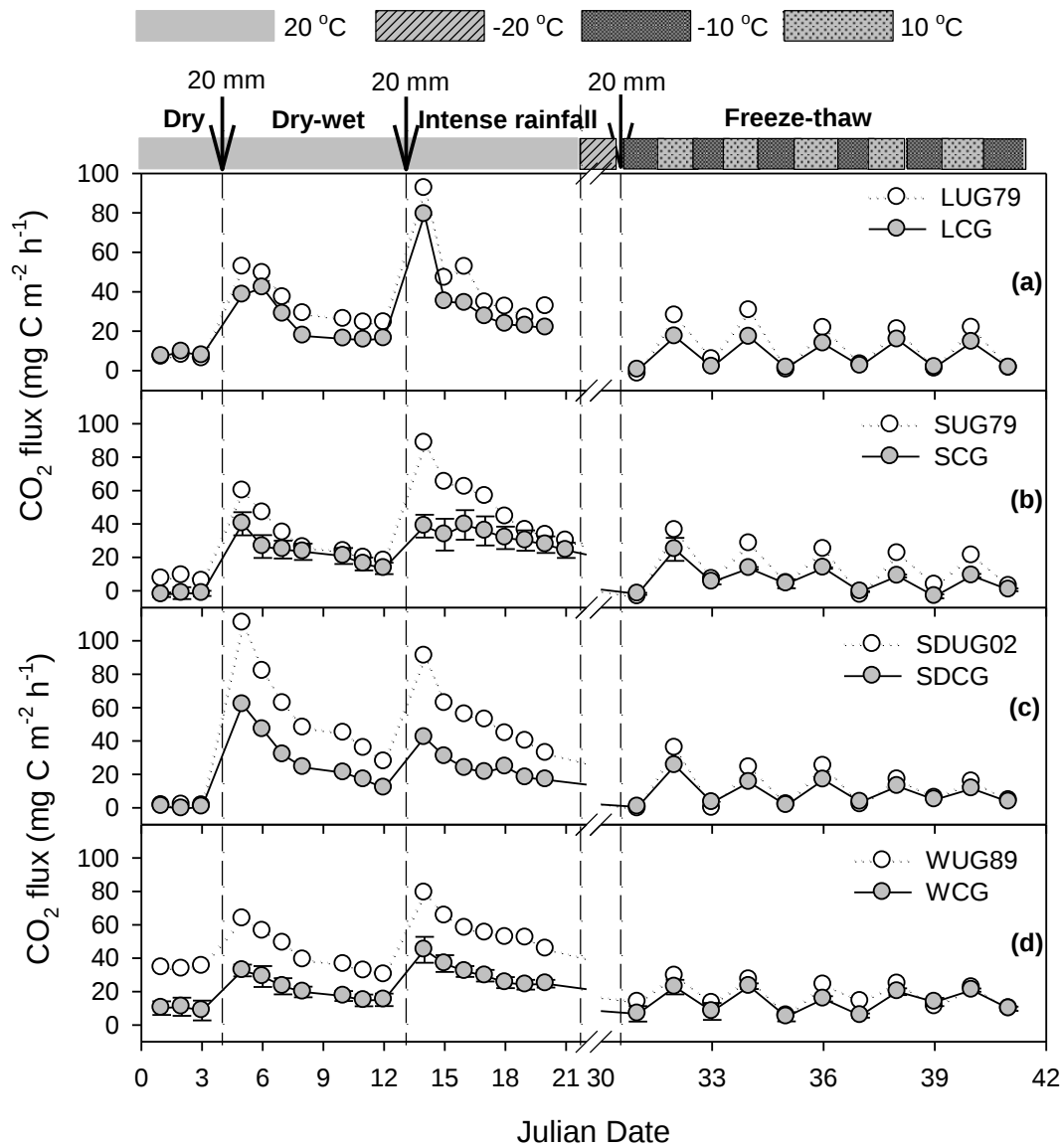
666 The lower cases on the upper-right corner of each data indicate significant ($p < 0.05$) differences among each column.

667 **Table 2** Soil CO₂ (mg C m⁻² h⁻¹), CH₄ (µg C m⁻² h⁻¹) and N₂O (µg N m⁻² h⁻¹) fluxes investigated grasslands during simulated dry, dry-wet, intense
668 rainfall and freeze-thaw periods.

Site code	Dry period			Dry-wet period			Intense rainfall period			Freeze-thaw period		
	CO ₂	CH ₄	N ₂ O	CO ₂	CH ₄	N ₂ O	CO ₂	CH ₄	N ₂ O	CO ₂	CH ₄	N ₂ O
SUG79	7±2 ^{bc}	-48±2 ^b	2±1 ^b	33±15 ^{ab}	-37±7 ^{bc}	33±11 ^c	52±20 ^a	-33±6 ^{bc}	102±31 ^b	13±13 ^a	-23±12 ^b	8±5 ^c
SCG	2±1 ^d	-46±5 ^{ab}	1±1	24±8 ^c	-40±10 ^{ab}	21±8 ^c	33±5 ^b	-33±7 ^{bc}	72±18 ^c	7±8 ^b	-17±12 ^b	8±7 ^c
LUG79	7±1 ^c	-52±1 ^a	0±0 ^b	35±12 ^{ab}	-53±4 ^a	5±2 ^d	45±23 ^a	-49±8 ^a	5±1 ^e	12±11 ^a	-44±9 ^a	2±1 ^c
LCG	8±1 ^{bc}	-41±3 ^c	1±1 ^b	25±11 ^c	-40±3 ^c	12±11 ^{cd}	35±20 ^b	-34±8 ^c	21±31 ^d	8±7 ^b	-21±7 ^b	3±2 ^c
SDUG02	1±1 ^d	-9±2 ^d	2±0 ^b	59±29 ^a	-10±7 ^d	21±15 ^c	54±19 ^a	-15±5 ^d	16±2 ^d	12±12 ^a	-15±11 ^{bc}	2±2 ^c
SDCG	0±0 ^e	-12±3 ^d	1±1 ^b	31±18 ^b	-14±6 ^d	9±4 ^d	25±9 ^b	-17±4 ^d	5±1 ^e	9±8 ^b	-9±8 ^c	2±2 ^c
WUG89	34±1 ^a	-1±1 ^e	16±1 ^a	44±13 ^{ab}	4±5 ^e	97±20 ^a	58±11 ^a	4±7 ^f	288±64 ^a	18±8 ^a	3±3 ^d	51±22 ^a
WCG	10±1 ^b	-2±1 ^e	14±1 ^a	22±7 ^d	-2±3 ^e	70±13 ^b	31±8 ^b	-5±5 ^e	130±37 ^b	14±7 ^{ab}	1±2 ^d	18±8 ^b

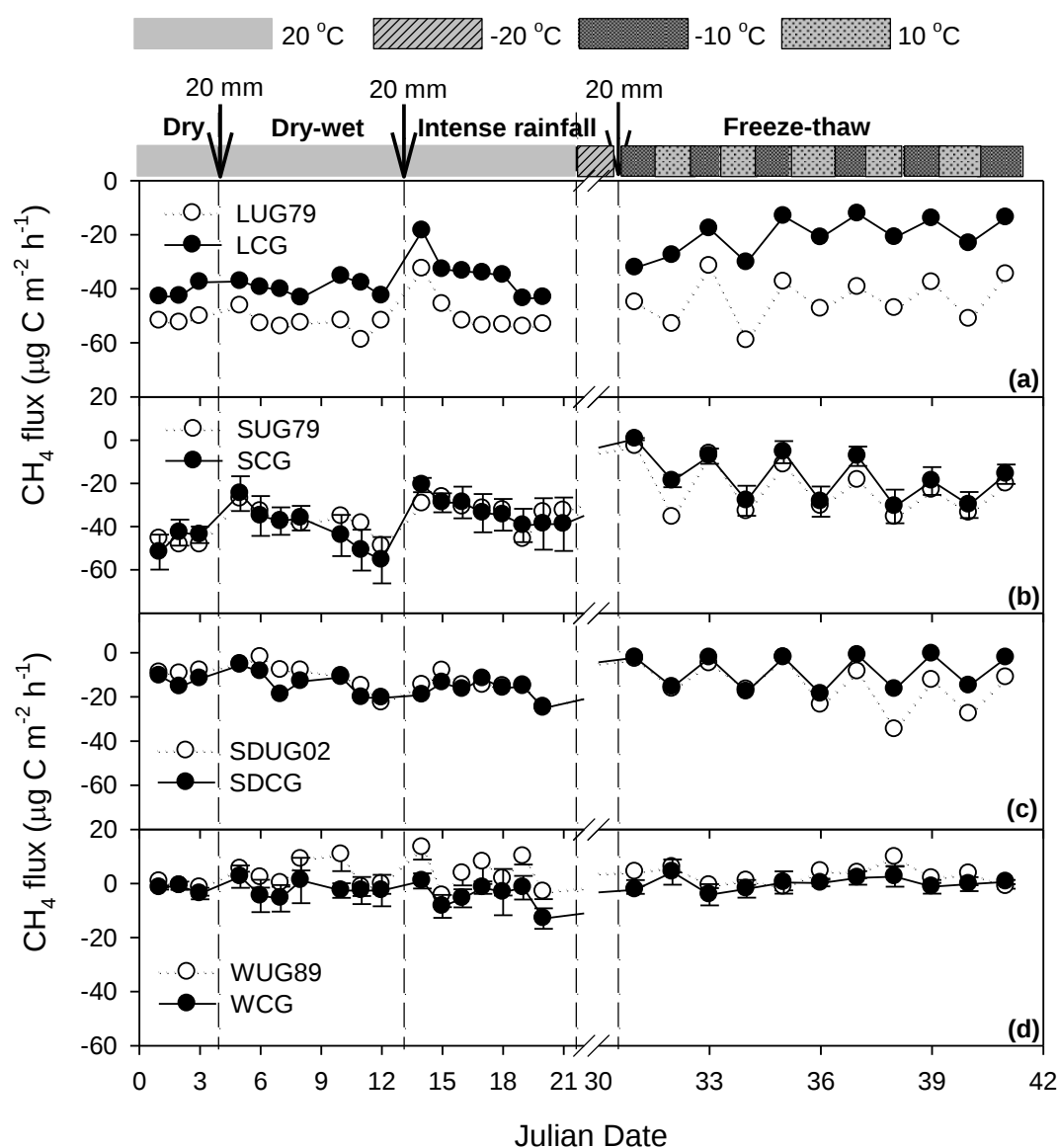
669 The lower cases on the upper-right corner of each data indicate significant ($p < 0.05$) differences among each column.

670 **List of Figures**



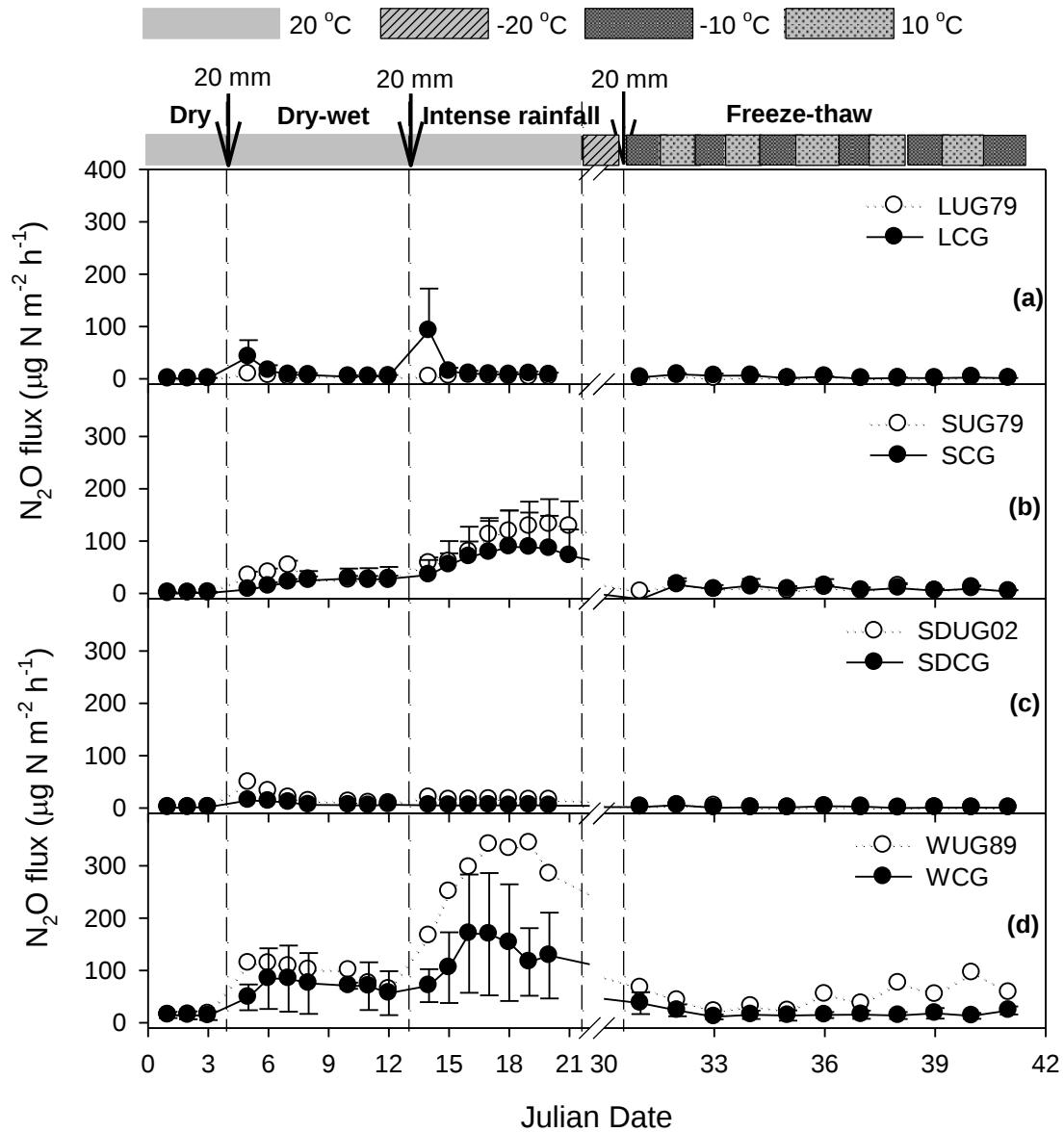
671

672 **Fig.1** Variations of soil CO₂ fluxes from investigated grasslands (Leymus steppe, Stipa steppe, Sand
673 dune and Wetland) during simulated dry, dry-wet, intense rainfall and freeze-thaw conditions. Black
674 down arrows indicate time to add water as simulated rainfall. Different colors and patterns of
675 rectangles represent different incubation temperatures. The given data were the means of four
676 replicates and standard deviations.



677

678 **Fig.2** Variations of soil CH₄ fluxes from investigated grasslands (Leymus steppe, Stipa steppe, Sand
 679 dune and Wetland) during simulated dry, dry-wet, intense rainfall and freeze-thaw conditions. Black
 680 down arrows indicate time to add water as simulated rainfall. Different colors and patterns of
 681 rectangles represent different incubation temperatures. The given data were the means of four
 682 replicates and standard deviations.



683

684 **Fig.3** Variations of soil N₂O fluxes from investigated grasslands (Leymus steppe, Stipa steppe, Sand
 685 due and Wetland) during simulated dry, dry-wet, intense rainfall and freeze-thaw contitions. Black
 686 down arrows indicate time to add water as simulated rainfall. Different corlors and patterns of
 687 rectangles represent different incubation temperatures. The given data were the means of four
 688 replicates and standard deviations.

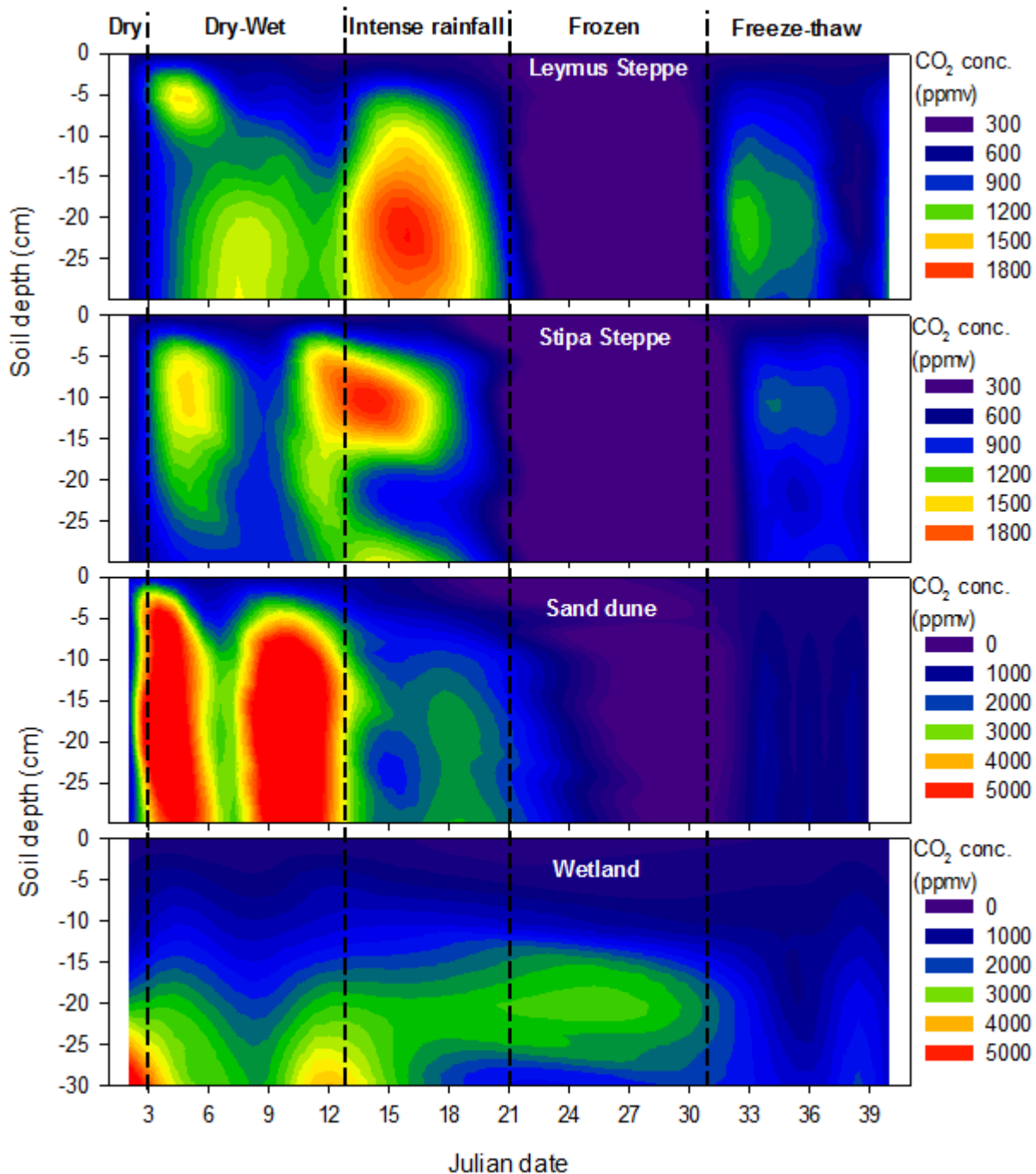
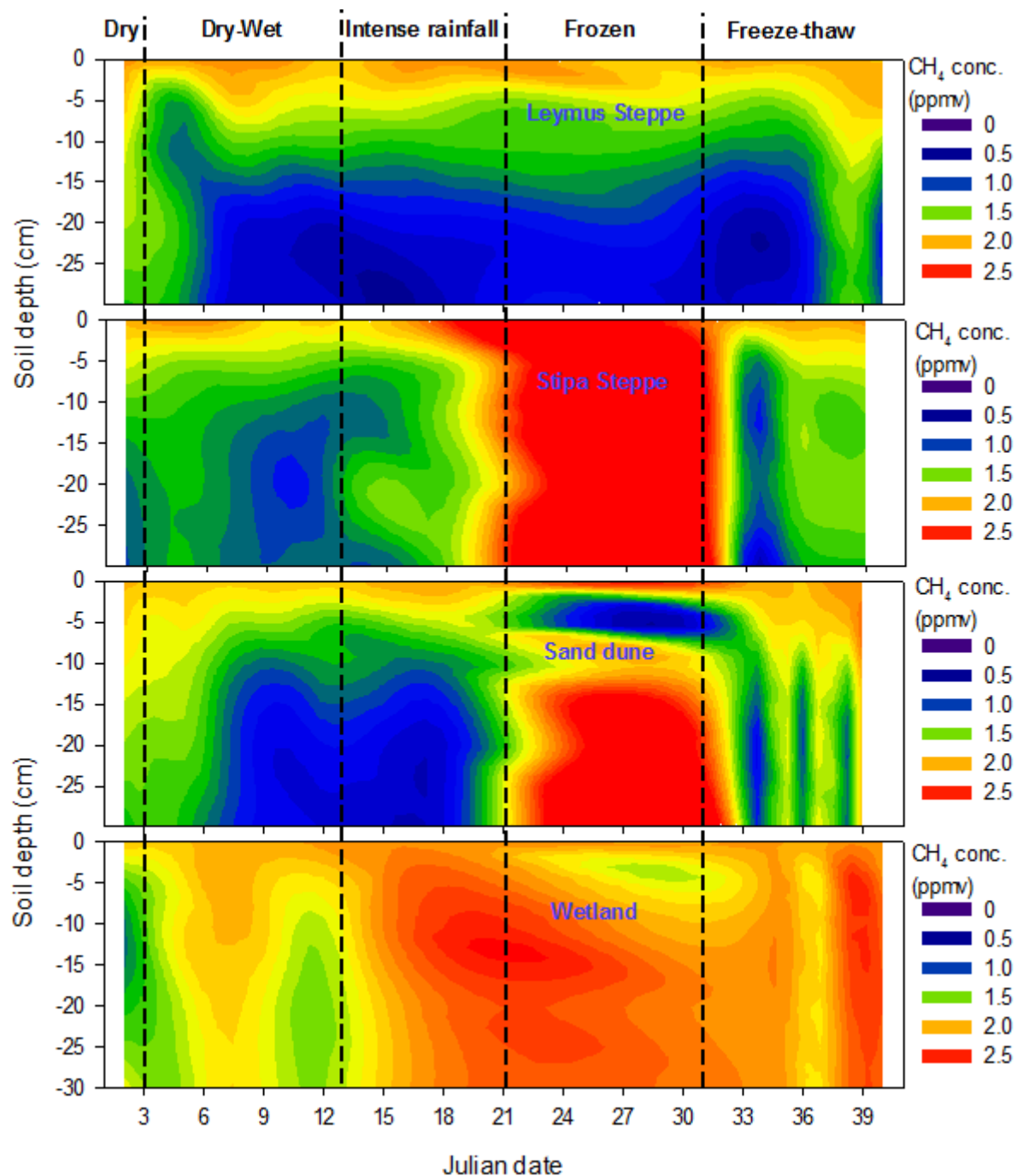


Fig.4 Variations of soil CO₂ concentrations at different depths from investigated grasslands (Leymus steppe, Stipa steppe, Sand due and Wetland) during simulated dry (1-3 days), dry-wet (4-13days), intense rainfall (13-21 days) and freeze-thaw periods (31-40 days). Frozen period represents soil cores were frozen in -20 °C for a month.



694

695 **Fig.5** Variations of soil CH₄ concentrations at different depths from investigated grasslands (Leymus
 696 steppe, Stipa steppe, Sand dune and Wetland) during simulated dry (1-3 days), dry-wet (4-13days),
 697 intense rainfall (13-21 days) and freeze-thaw periods (31-40 days). Frozen period represents soil cores
 698 were frozen in -20 °C for a month.

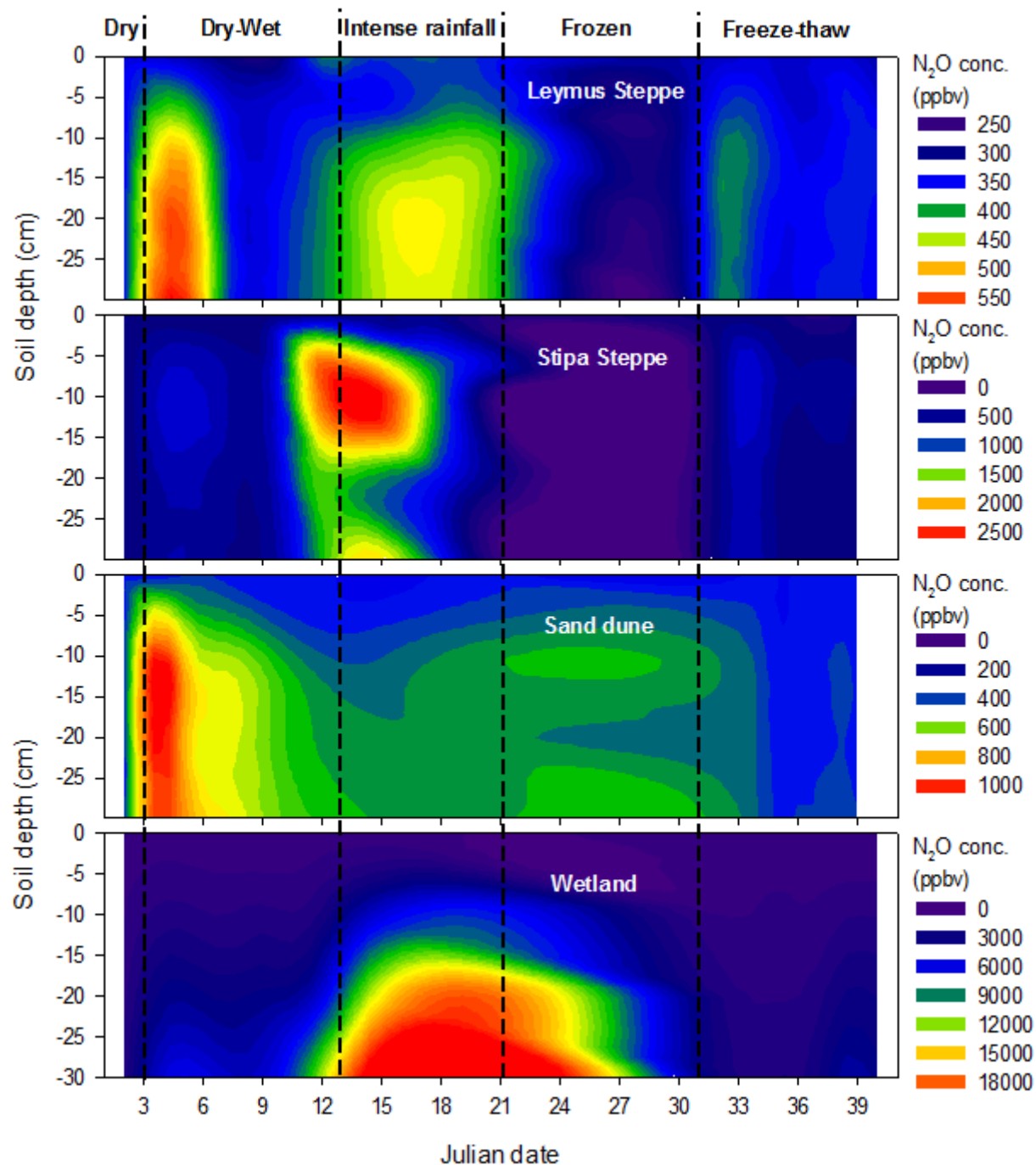


Fig.6 Variations of soil N_2O concentrations at different depths from investigated grasslands (Leymus steppe, Stipa steppe, Sand due and Wetland) during simulated dry (1-3 days), dry-wet (4-13days), intense rainfall (13-21 days) and freeze-thaw periods (31-40 days). Frozen period represents soil cores were frozen in $-20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ for a month.

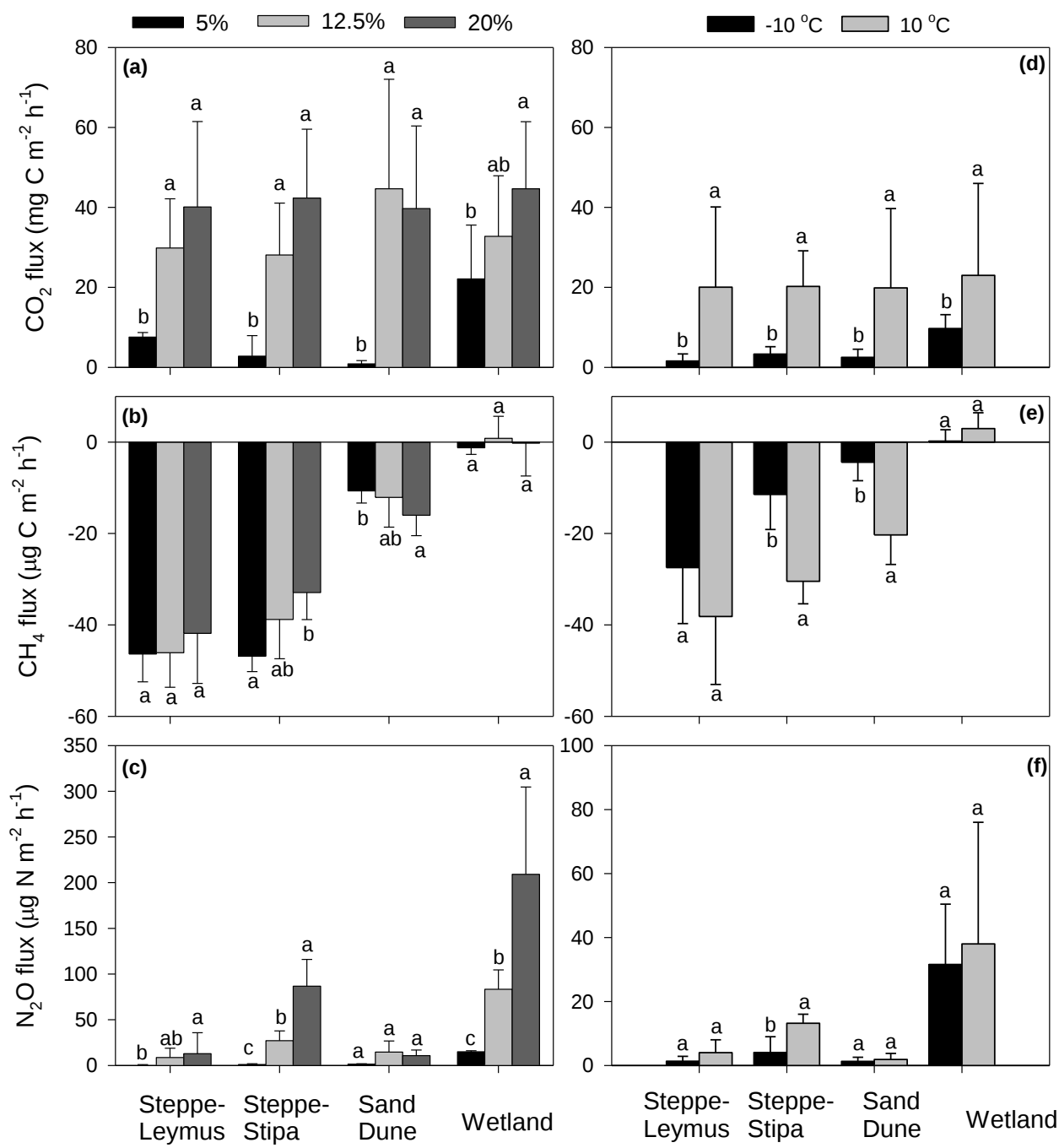
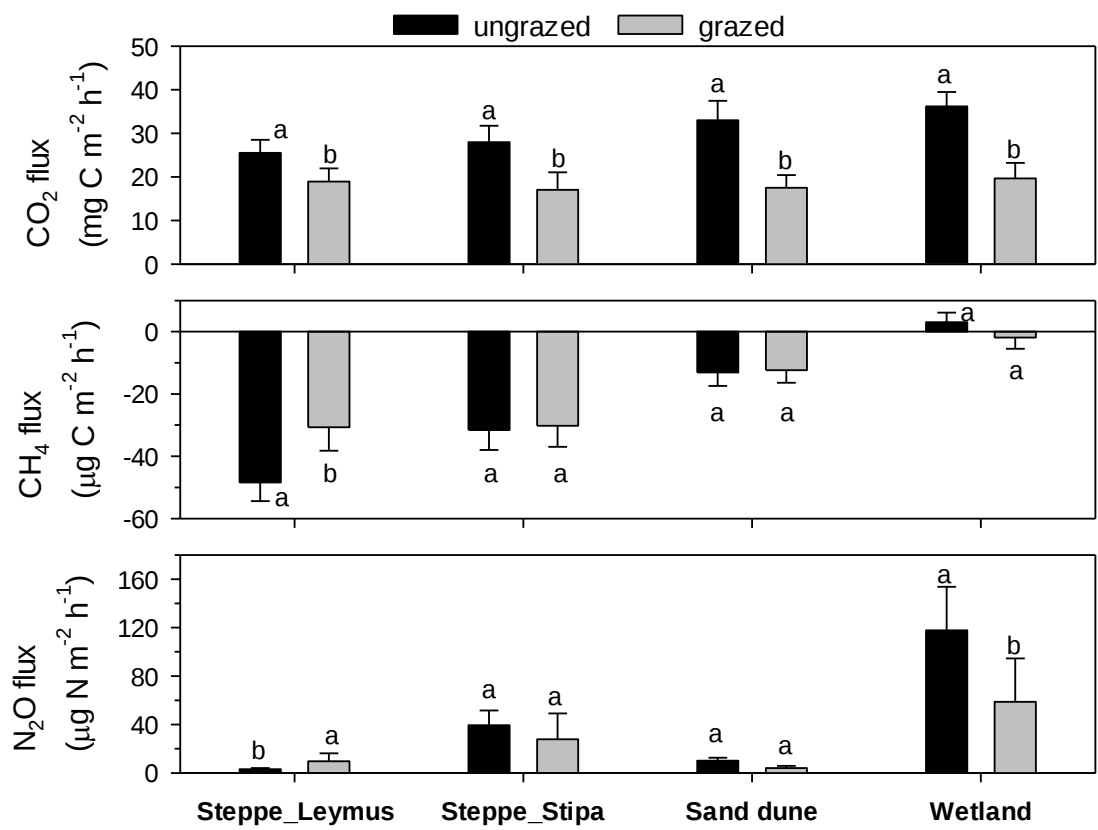


Fig.7 Soil CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O fluxes from investigated grasslands (Leymus steppe, Stipa steppe, Sand due and Wetland) in different air temprature and soil moisture conditions. Two temperatures represent conditions of freeze period and thaw period, respectively. Three values of soil moisture (5%, 12.5% and 20%) averaged from dry period, dry-wet simulation period, and intense rainfall and freeze-thaw periods, respectively. These values of soil moistures were rounded to nearest value. Temporal-spatial standard deviations of four soil core replicates were calcuated for each data. The lowercases above or below the bars indicate the significant differences between two air temperatures

712 and among three soil moistures.



713

714 **Fig.8** The average of soil CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O fluxes from investigated grasslands (Leymus steppe,
715 Stipa steppe, Sand due and Wetland) during whole incubation peirods. Spatial standard deviations of
716 four soil core replicateswere calcauted for each data. The lowercases above or below the bars
717 indicate the significant differences between ungrazed and grazed plots.