



Susorney, H. C. M., James, P. B., Johnson, C. L., Chabot, N. L., Ernst, C. M., Mazarico, E. M., Neumann, G. A., & Kinczyk, M. J. (2019). The thickness of radar-bright deposits in Mercury's northern hemisphere from individual Mercury Laser Altimeter tracks. *Icarus*, 323, 40-45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.icarus.2019.01.016>

Peer reviewed version

License (if available):
CC BY-NC-ND

Link to published version (if available):
[10.1016/j.icarus.2019.01.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.icarus.2019.01.016)

[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)
PDF-document

This is the author accepted manuscript (AAM). The final published version (version of record) is available online via Elsevier at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0019103518305918>. Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-policy/pure/user-guides/ebr-terms/>

1 The thickness of radar-bright deposits in Mercury's
2 northern hemisphere from individual Mercury Laser
3 Altimeter tracks

4 Hannah C. M. Susorney^{a,b}, Peter B. James^c, Catherine L. Johnson^{a,b},
5 Nancy L. Chabot^d, Carolyn M. Ernst^d, Erwan M. Mazarico^e, Gregory A.
6 Neumann^e, Mallory L. Kinczyk^f

7 ^a*Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences, University of British Columbia,*
8 *Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z4, Canada.*

9 ^b*Planetary Science Institute, Tucson, AZ 85719, USA*

10 ^c*Baylor University, Waco TX 76798*

11 ^d*The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, Laurel, MD 20723, USA.*

12 ^e*Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, MD 20771*

13 ^f*North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695*

14 **Abstract**

15 The discovery of Mercury's radar-bright deposits has expanded our under-
16 standing of volatiles in the solar system. Key to deciphering the history and
17 origin of the radar-bright deposits is an estimate of the volume of radar-bright
18 material that in turn requires a measure of the average thickness of the de-
19 posits. In this study we investigate changes in topography across radar-bright
20 deposits hosted in flat-floored, complex craters using individual edited Mer-
21 cury Laser Altimeter (MLA) tracks. We compare the difference in heights of
22 radar-bright regions and non-radar-bright regions of the crater floor and the
23 difference of similarly sized and located regions in non-radar-bright craters
24 and show that the two populations cannot be distinguished. The similarity
25 of topography in these two sets of craters allows an upper limit of 15 m to
26 be placed on the thickness of the radar-bright deposits.

28 **1. Introduction**

29 The discovery that the north and south polar regions of Mercury con-
30 tain radar-bright deposits was enabled nearly 30 years ago by Earth-based
31 radar data (Slade et al., 1992; Harmon and Slade, 1992; Butler et al., 1993;
32 Harmon et al., 1994, 2001; Harmon, 2007; Harmon et al., 2011). These obser-
33 vations provided evidence that the nearest planet to the Sun may host volatile
34 reservoirs. One of the goals of the MErcury Surface, Space ENvironment,
35 GEochemistry, and Ranging (MESSENGER) mission was to characterize
36 these polar deposits to understand their nature and origin (Solomon et al.,
37 2007). MESSENGER observations have shown that radar-bright regions ex-
38 ist in areas of permanent shadow, the largest of which occur within craters
39 near Mercury’s poles (e.g., Deutsch et al., 2016; Chabot et al., 2018). In ad-
40 dition, evidence from multiple instruments on the MESSENGER spacecraft
41 identified water ice as the most likely source of radar-bright material (Neu-
42 mann et al., 2013; Paige et al., 2013; Lawrence et al., 2013; Chabot et al.,
43 2014, 2016).

44 Determining the age and origin of these deposits is important to under-
45 stand the history of water-ice on Mercury. For example, it is not currently
46 known how old the deposits are, whether the water-ice was delivered by a
47 single impactor or many impactors, and whether the impactor(s) in ques-
48 tion was an asteroid or a comet. To understand the origin of the deposits,
49 a reliable estimate of their volume must be obtained. The areal extent and
50 minimum thickness of the deposits (on the order of several radar wavelengths,

51 implying a depth of several meters, Black et al. (2010)) have been constrained
52 by radar images (i.e., Harmon et al., 2011) and maps of permanent shadows
53 (Chabot et al., 2012, 2013; Deutsch et al., 2016), but maximum thickness
54 values have varied (Talpe et al., 2012; Eke et al., 2017; Deutsch et al., 2018).
55 In this study, we measure the maximum thickness of the deposits using a
56 different approach from those adopted previously and derive a new estimate
57 for the volume of water-ice on Mercury. Hereafter, we will refer to the de-
58 posits as radar-bright deposits as we use the radar-bright areal extent in this
59 study. Before discussing the methodology used in our study, we first review
60 measurements to-date of the maximum ice thickness.

61 In Talpe et al. (2012) the thickness of the radar-bright deposits was mea-
62 sured using two methods with Mercury Laser Altimeter (MLA) tracks. In
63 the first method, the surface roughness of the interiors of craters that host
64 radar-bright deposits and the interiors of craters that do not host such de-
65 posits were compared. No differences in surface roughness between the two
66 types of craters were found, providing no constraints on the thickness of the
67 deposits from this method. In the second method, crater depth-to-diameter
68 ratios of craters that host radar-bright and non-radar-bright deposits were
69 used to place an upper estimate on the thickness of radar-bright deposits of
70 170 m.

71 More recently, Eke et al. (2017) used gridded MLA data to compare the
72 interior topography of craters that host radar-bright deposits and craters that
73 do not host radar-bright deposits and found excess heights associated with
74 the craters that host radar-bright deposits of 55 ± 35 m (1σ). Deutsch et al.
75 (2018) used the depth-to-diameter ratio of small craters and the assumption

76 that these craters pre-dated the radar-bright deposits to place an upper limit
77 of the thickness of the deposits. By comparing the depth-to-diameter ratio
78 of these small craters to the corresponding relationship for the general simple
79 crater population an upper limit for the thickness of radar-bright deposits
80 was found to be $41 +30/-14$ m (1σ).

81 In this study, we estimate the thickness of radar-bright deposits by com-
82 paring the topography of individual crater floors that are partially covered in
83 radar-bright deposits and partially free of radar-bright deposits using edited
84 MLA tracks. In the following sections, we summarize the MLA data used and
85 how we selected craters for this analysis. We then present how the difference
86 in height was assessed between the region of the crater floor hosting radar-
87 bright material and the region of the floor without radar-bright material. In
88 order to quantify the effects of natural variability in crater floor topography,
89 we performed similar measurements using control craters that do not host
90 radar-bright material. Finally, we discuss the results of our study and the
91 implications for the origin of volatiles on Mercury.

92 **2. Methods**

93 *2.1. MLA data*

94 We used individual MLA tracks (Smith, 2017) rather than gridded MLA
95 topography (Zuber et al., 2012) because individual MLA tracks provide
96 higher resolution than derived gridded datasets and because gridded products
97 suffer from interpolation in areas of sparse coverage. MLA track coverage is
98 highest near 80°N near periapsis and where becomes increasingly more sparse
99 towards the equator. The MLA spot to spot spacing ranges from 300–800

100 m depending on where in MESSENGER's orbit the measurements were ob-
101 tained and the footprint size ranges from 15–100 m in diameter (Zuber et al.,
102 2012). MLA topography is gridded at 250 m horizontal resolution and re-
103 quires interpolation to fill in areas with sparse coverage. We edited individual
104 MLA tracks (see Section 2.3) to remove topography not associated with the
105 radar-bright deposits. We used all MLA track data but also performed the
106 same analyses with just high threshold channel 1 data (the lowest noise chan-
107 nel on MLA, Cavanaugh et al. (2007)) to test the sensitivity of our results.
108 Using high threshold channel 1 data resulted in fewer measurements (about
109 4% of the total MLA dataset is channel 1), but the mean values for channels
110 1–4 and the high threshold channel 1 were within the one standard deviation
111 of the results. Thus the results reported here are from our analyses of the
112 full channel 1–4 MLA data set.

113 *2.2. Identification of craters that host radar-bright deposits*

114 To identify craters that host radar-bright deposits for our study we first
115 selected all craters larger than 30 km in diameter and poleward of 80°N
116 (where the most extensive radar-bright deposits are present). This criteria
117 resulted in a list of 11 craters. We found that 10 of the 11 craters host radar-
118 bright deposits. However, because our goal was to compare the topography of
119 the radar-bright and non-radar-bright regions within each crater, we retained
120 only craters for which the floors were partially, not fully, covered in radar-
121 bright deposits. This allows us to measure the topographic difference between
122 the portion of the crater floors that hosts radar-bright deposits and the part
123 that is free of such deposits, which results in an estimate of radar-bright
124 deposit thickness. This criteria reduced the data set to 5 craters. Finally,

125 we checked whether any MLA tracks crossed the crater floor. Four craters
126 (Table. 1 and Fig 1) match all of the selection criteria.

127 *2.3. MLA track editing with MDIS images*

128 We hand-edited MLA tracks to remove topographic returns not associated
129 with the radar-bright deposits. While the crater floor appears superficially
130 smooth in images and in topographic profiles of the entire crater, zooming
131 into just the topography of the crater floor reveals substantial topographic
132 variations even in the freshest craters observed. We projected individual
133 MLA tracks on to a 250 meter/pixel MDIS basemap (see Fig. 2, Denevi
134 et al. (2017)) and hand-selected and removed portions of the tracks where the
135 topography that deviated from the crater floor such as at superposed impact
136 craters, the central peak, the rim, and the crater walls (Fig. 3). We used
137 the MDIS image and the MLA track together to assess where the crater floor
138 began and ended on a given track. We edited the track in both the radar-
139 bright and non-radar-bright region of the crater floor. From the average
140 topography of MLA returns within the radar-bright region ($h_{\text{radar-bright}}$) and
141 the average topography of the MLA returns in the non-radar-bright region
142 ($h_{\text{non-radar-bright}}$) we calculated the difference in floor topography (Δh) for
143 each MLA track that crossed the crater (Fig. 4).

$$\Delta h = h_{\text{radar-bright}} - h_{\text{non-radar-bright}} \quad (1)$$

144 *2.4. Control Craters*

145 To investigate the statistics of our measurement of craters that host-radar
146 bright deposits, we used non radar-bright craters as a control dataset. We

147 chose craters that do not host radar-bright deposits from the crater database
148 created by Kinczyk et al. (2018) and used a random seed to select 8 craters
149 (Table 1) that are fresh (class 3 or above), larger than 30 km, and lie between
150 60°N and 80°N (the region of highest MLA track density). The freshness
151 classification scheme is based on the crater morphology seen in images: the
152 freshest craters are class 5 and the most degraded craters are class 1 (Kinczyk
153 et al., 2018). We then added a polygon to the southern portion of the crater
154 floor with a shape and extent similar to those of the radar-bright regions of
155 craters that host radar-bright deposits (shaped similar to an orange wedge
156 covering about 1/4 to 1/3 of the crater floor) and treated this region as if
157 it were radar-bright. We hand-edited all tracks for the eight craters that do
158 not host radar-bright deposits as outlined above.

159 **3. Results**

160 *3.1. Craters that host radar-bright deposits*

161 We calculated the mean and one standard deviation of Δh for all MLA
162 tracks for each crater (Table. 1 and Fig. 5) and also calculated the mean and
163 one standard deviation of all four craters, 24 ± 27 m. Table S1 and S2 give the
164 MLA tracks used. Note that zero elevation difference—which would imply
165 no elevation difference between radar-bright and non-radar-bright regions—is
166 contained within one standard deviation of the combined mean.

167 *3.2. Craters that do not host radar-bright deposits*

168 As noted earlier, the floors of impact craters, even fresh ones, have natu-
169 ral topographic variations that could complicate our interpretation of topo-
170 graphic differences. Although we edited the MLA tracks to remove obvious

171 variations of topography unrelated to the radar-bright deposits, we cannot
172 ignore the possibility that our measurements could be influenced by a nat-
173 ural sloping of the crater floors toward the crater walls where the deposits
174 are generally located. To test this possibility, we identified a set of control
175 craters without radar-bright deposits and analyzed them in the same man-
176 ner as the radar-bright craters. The spread in the Δh for the eight craters
177 that do not host radar-bright deposits was found to be similar to that for
178 the craters that host radar-bright deposits (Fig 5). The mean Δh for all 8
179 craters without radar-bright deposits is 50 ± 25 m, larger than the mean Δh
180 for the craters with radar-bright deposits. The elevation difference for the
181 craters without radar-bright deposits obviously cannot be attributed to the
182 presence of ice.

183 4. Discussion

184 The average Δh for the radar-bright and non-radar-bright craters are
185 not significantly different at the 1-sigma level, and the mean Δh for the
186 control craters is larger than the mean Δh for the craters that host radar-
187 bright deposits. This implies that the measured 24-m difference in elevation
188 for the craters that host radar-bright deposits likely includes a substantial
189 contribution from the natural elevation variation of the crater floor. The
190 sources of this natural variation include the gradual rising of topography
191 from the center of the crater to the rim, and undulations in the floor itself.

192 Although the mean Δh in our radar-bright regions is less than that in our
193 control craters, there is a large range of Δh for both sets of craters and our
194 sample sizes are small (n=4 for partially radar-bright craters and n=8 for our

195 control data set). We thus address a slightly different question: given that
196 crater floor elevations can vary considerably from crater to crater, what is the
197 likelihood that the Δh of radar-bright regions are in fact systematically higher
198 than the Δh of the control craters without radar-bright deposits? A Student's
199 t-test applied to our two crater populations shows that a difference in Δh of
200 more than 15 meters (where the Δh for the radar-bright craters is greater
201 than that for the control craters) can be rejected at the 95% confidence level.
202 We take this result as a plausible upper bound on the mean thickness of
203 ice for the permanently shadowed regions included in this analysis with the
204 caveat that our sample size is very small. This 15-m upper limit is thinner
205 than previous estimates (Fig. 6).

206 We use the 15-m estimate of radar-bright material as an average thickness
207 for all radar-bright deposits across both polar regions (with an area of 25,000
208 km² from Harmon et al. (2011)) to place an upper bound of 375 km³ on
209 the total volume of such deposits on Mercury. From this we calculate the
210 mass of ice on Mercury to be 3.45×10^{17} grams (assuming the radar-bright
211 material is pure ice with a density of $917 \frac{kg}{m^3}$). These estimates assume
212 that the upper bound on radar-bright material thickness derived from the
213 four craters suitable for the analysis here is representative of all radar-bright
214 deposits on Mercury. However, smaller craters may host thinner radar-bright
215 deposits, especially in cases where there is only partial coverage of the crater
216 floor, and craters where the floors are completely covered in ice (6 of the
217 12 craters originally investigated in section 2) may have thicker deposits. It
218 has been proposed that the Hokusai crater could be the source of Mercury's
219 radar-bright deposits, delivering up to 3×10^{17} g of water to Mercury, (Ernst

220 et al., 2018)) but one limitation of this model to date has been that the
221 maximum mass of volatiles that could be delivered by such an impactor is on
222 the low side of previous volume estimates. Our estimates, which are lower
223 than previous studies, could support such a delivery method.

224 **5. Conclusion**

225 In this study, we investigated the thickness of radar-bright deposits on
226 Mercury using individual MLA tracks. We found four craters that have a
227 portion of their floor covered in radar-bright deposits and are suitable for such
228 analysis. We also identified a control data set of eight similarly-sized craters
229 that have no radar bright deposits. Our results demonstrate that the excess
230 elevation associated with radar-bright deposits is difficult to distinguish from
231 the natural variations of the crater floor, even after careful data selection and
232 the use of the highest resolution topography data from MLA tracks (they
233 overlap at the 1-sigma level). We find an upper limit of 15 m for the relief
234 of the radar-bright regions, through a statistical comparison of radar-bright
235 craters with non-radar-bright craters. The approach here is complementary
236 to that of previous studies and the results are broadly consistent, but we
237 find a smaller upper limit to the thickness of the radar-bright deposits. The
238 revised thickness estimate, scaled to the full population of radar bright areas
239 allows a calculation for the volume of such deposits (3.75×10^{17} grams).
240 Higher-resolution laser altimetry data of Mercury from the BepiColumbo
241 mission will allow the thickness of these deposits to be studied in greater
242 detail and will provide information on the southern pole deposits that were
243 not accessible with MLA data.

244 **Acknowledgments**

245 We would like to acknowledge the helpful review by an anonymous re-
246 viewer that improved and strengthened the paper. HCMS would like to thank
247 G. Susorney-Seviour for comments on a draft of this paper.

248 **References**

- 249 Black, G. J., Campbell, D. B., Harmon, J. K., Sep. 2010. Radar measure-
250 ments of Mercury's north pole at 70 cm wavelength. *Icarus* 209 (1), 224–
251 229.
- 252 Butler, B. J., Muhleman, D. O., Slade, M. A., Aug. 1993. Mercury: Full-
253 disk radar images and the detection and stability of ice at the North Pole.
254 *Journal of Geophysical Research: Solid Earth* 98 (E8), 15003–15023.
- 255 Cavanaugh, J. F., Smith, J. C., Sun, X., Bartels, A. E., Ramos-Izquierdo, L.,
256 Krebs, D. J., McGarry, J. F., Trunzo, R., Novo-Gradac, A. M., Britt, J. L.,
257 Karsh, J., Katz, R. B., Lukemire, A. T., Szymkiewicz, R., Berry, D. L.,
258 Swinski, J. P., Neumann, G. A., Zuber, M. T., Smith, D. E., Aug. 2007.
259 The Mercury Laser Altimeter Instrument for the MESSENGER Mission.
260 *Space Science Reviews* 131 (1), 451–479.
- 261 Chabot, N. L., Ernst, C. M., Denevi, B. W., Harmon, J. K., Murchie, S. L.,
262 Blewett, D. T., Solomon, S. C., Zhong, E. D., May 2012. Areas of perma-
263 nent shadow in Mercury's south polar region ascertained by MESSENGER
264 orbital imaging. *Geophysical Research Letters* 39 (9).

265 Chabot, N. L., Ernst, C. M., Denevi, B. W., Nair, H., Deutsch, A. N.,
266 Blewett, D. T., Murchie, S. L., Neumann, G. A., Mazarico, E., Paige,
267 D. A., Harmon, J. K., Head, J. W., Solomon, S. C., Dec. 2014. Images of
268 surface volatiles in Mercury’s polar craters acquired by the MESSENGER
269 spacecraft. *Geology* 42 (12), 1051–1054.

270 Chabot, N. L., Ernst, C. M., Harmon, J. K., Murchie, S. L., Solomon, S. C.,
271 Blewett, D. T., Denevi, B. W., Jan. 2013. Craters hosting radar-bright
272 deposits in Mercury’s north polar region: Areas of persistent shadow de-
273 termined from MESSENGER images. *Journal of Geophysical Research:*
274 *Planets* 118 (1), 26–36.

275 Chabot, N. L., Ernst, C. M., Paige, D. A., Nair, H., Denevi, B. W., Blewett,
276 D. T., Murchie, S. L., Deutsch, A. N., Head, J. W., Solomon, S. C.,
277 Sep. 2016. Imaging Mercury’s polar deposits during MESSENGER’s low-
278 altitude campaign. *Geophysical Research Letters* 43 (18), 9461–9468.

279 Chabot, N. L., Shread, E. E., Harmon, J. K., Feb. 2018. Investigating
280 Mercury’s South Polar Deposits: Arecibo Radar Observations and High-
281 Resolution Determination of Illumination Conditions. *Journal of Geophys-*
282 *ical Research: Planets* 123 (2), 666–681.

283 Denevi, B. W., Chabot, N. L., Murchie, S. L., Becker, K. J., Blewett, D. T.,
284 Domingue, D. L., Ernst, C. M., Hash, C. D., Hawkins, S. E., Keller, M. R.,
285 Laslo, N. R., Nair, H., Robinson, M. S., Seelos, F. P., Stephens, G. K.,
286 Turner, F. S., Solomon, S. C., Nov. 2017. Calibration, Projection, and
287 Final Image Products of MESSENGER’s Mercury Dual Imaging System.
288 *Space Science Reviews* 214 (1), 2.

289 Deutsch, A. N., Chabot, N. L., Mazarico, E., Ernst, C. M., Head, J. W., Neu-
290 mann, G. A., Solomon, S. C., Dec. 2016. Comparison of areas in shadow
291 from imaging and altimetry in the north polar region of Mercury and im-
292 plications for polar ice deposits. *Icarus* 280, 158–171.

293 Deutsch, A. N., Head, J. W., Chabot, N. L., Neumann, G. A., May 2018.
294 Constraining the thickness of polar ice deposits on Mercury using the Mer-
295 cury Laser Altimeter and small craters in permanently shadowed regions.
296 *Icarus* 305, 139–148.

297 Eke, V. R., Lawrence, D. J., Teodoro, L. F. A., Mar. 2017. How thick are
298 Mercury’s polar water ice deposits? *Icarus* 284, 407–415.

299 Ernst, C. M., and, N. C. M. C., 2018, 2018. Could the Hokusai Impact Have
300 Delivered Mercury’s Water Ice? Proceedings of the Mercury: Current and
301 Future Science of the Innermost Planet Meeting, 6094.

302 Harmon, J. K., Oct. 2007. Radar Imaging of Mercury. *Space Science Reviews*
303 132 (2-4), 307–349.

304 Harmon, J. K., Perillat, P. J., Slade, M. A., Jan. 2001. High-Resolution
305 Radar Imaging of Mercury’s North Pole. *Icarus* 149 (1), 1–15.

306 Harmon, J. K., Slade, M. A., Oct. 1992. Radar Mapping of Mercury: Full-
307 Disk Images and Polar Anomalies. *Science* 258 (5082), 640–643.

308 Harmon, J. K., Slade, M. A., Rice, M. S., Jan. 2011. Radar imagery of
309 Mercury’s putative polar ice: 1999-2005 Arecibo results. *Icarus* 211 (1),
310 37–50.

311 Harmon, J. K., Slade, M. A., Velez, R. A., Crespo, A., Dryer, M. J., Johnson,
312 J. M., May 1994. Radar mapping of Mercury's polar anomalies. *Nature*
313 369 (6477), 213–215.

314 Kinczyk, M., Byrne, P., Prockter, L., Susorney, H., Barnouin, O., 2018.
315 Crater Degradation on Mercury: A Global Perspective. Proceedings of the
316 Mercury: Current and Future Science of the Innermost Planet Meeting,
317 6116.

318 Lawrence, D. J., Feldman, W. C., Goldsten, J. O., Maurice, S., Peplowski,
319 P. N., Anderson, B. J., Bazell, D., McNutt, R. L., Nittler, L. R., Pret-
320 tyman, T. H., Rodgers, D. J., Solomon, S. C., Weider, S. Z., Jan. 2013.
321 Evidence for Water Ice Near Mercury's North Pole from MESSENGER
322 Neutron Spectrometer Measurements. *Science* 339 (6117), 292–296.

323 Neumann, G. A., Cavanaugh, J. F., Sun, X., Mazarico, E. M., Smith, D. E.,
324 Zuber, M. T., Mao, D., Paige, D. A., Solomon, S. C., Ernst, C. M.,
325 Barnouin, O. S., Jan. 2013. Bright and Dark Polar Deposits on Mercury:
326 Evidence for Surface Volatiles. *Science* 339 (6117), 296–300.

327 Paige, D. A., Siegler, M. A., Harmon, J. K., Neumann, G. A., Mazarico,
328 E. M., Smith, D. E., Zuber, M. T., Harju, E., Delitsky, M. L., Solomon,
329 S. C., Jan. 2013. Thermal Stability of Volatiles in the North Polar Region
330 of Mercury. *Science* 339 (6117), 300–303.

331 Slade, M. A., Butler, B. J., Muhleman, D. O., Oct. 1992. Mercury Radar
332 Imaging: Evidence for Polar Ice. *Science* 258 (5082), 635–640.

- 333 Smith, D. E., 2017. Mercury Laser Altimeter RDR Data Release 18. NASA
334 Planetary Data System.
- 335 Solomon, S. C., McNutt, R. L., Gold, R. E., Domingue, D. L., 2007. MES-
336 SENDER Mission Overview. Space Science Reviews 131 (1-4), 3–39.
- 337 Talpe, M. J., Zuber, M. T., Yang, D., Neumann, G. A., Solomon, S. C.,
338 Mazarico, E., Vilas, F., 2012. Characterization of the morphometry of im-
339 pact craters hosting polar deposits in Mercury’s north polar region. Journal
340 of Geophysical Research: Planets 117 (E12).
- 341 Zuber, M. T., Smith, D. E., Phillips, R. J., Solomon, S. C., Neumann, G. A.,
342 Hauck II, S. A., Peale, S. J., Barnouin, O. S., Head, J. W., Johnson,
343 C. L., Lemoine, F. G., Mazarico, E., Sun, X., Torrence, M. H., Freed,
344 A. M., Klimczak, C., Margot, J.-L., Oberst, J., Perry, M. E., McNutt Jr,
345 R. L., Balcerski, J. A., Michel, N., Talpe, M. J., Yang, D., Apr. 2012.
346 Topography of the Northern Hemisphere of Mercury from MESSENGER
347 Laser Altimetry. Science 336 (6078), 217–220.

348 **Figures**

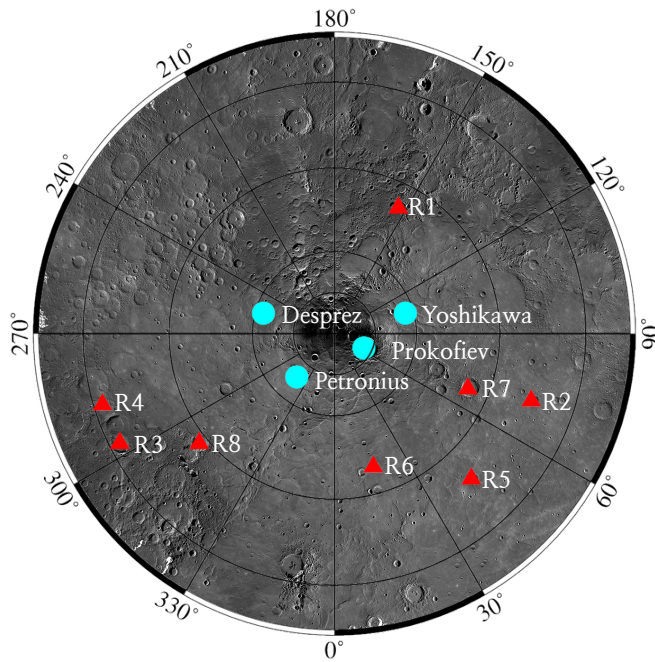


Figure 1: MDIS basemap (Denevi et al., 2017) from 55°N to 90° with longitude in degrees East. The cyan circles represent the four craters that host radar-bright deposits and the red triangles represent the 8 craters that do not host radar-bright deposits used in the study.

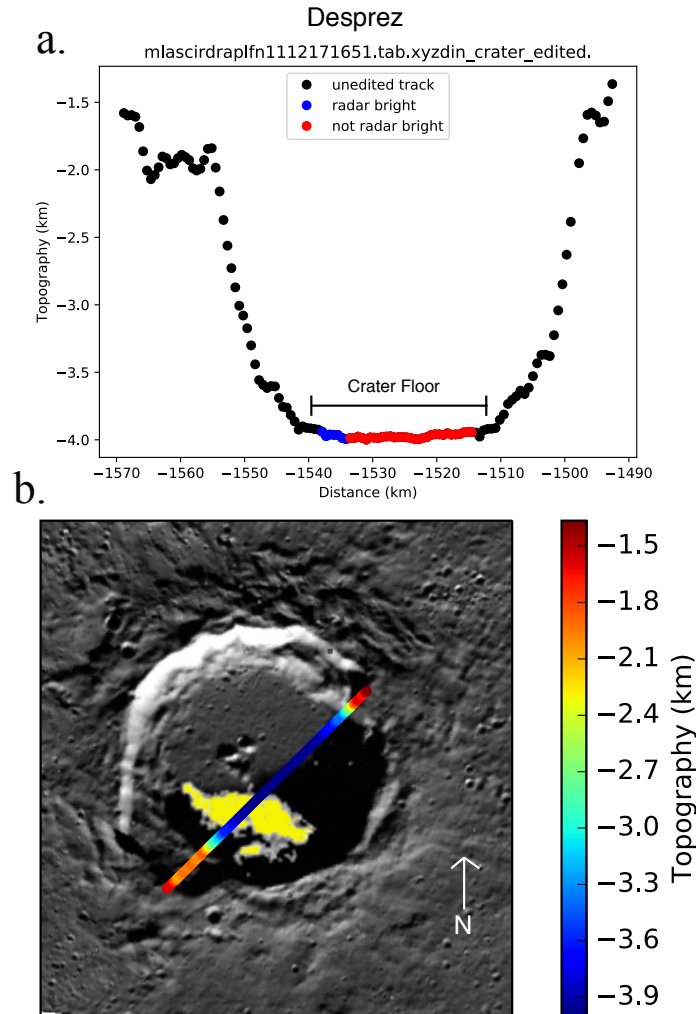


Figure 2: The 50-km diameter crater Desprez, with (a) the altimetry profile from a single MLA track and (b) the MLA track projected onto the 250 m/pixel MDIS basemap (Denevi et al., 2017). We used the MDIS image to assist in hand-editing MLA tracks: specifically to identify the part of the track crossing the radar-bright deposits (blue dots in (a)), the part of the crater floor lacking radar-bright deposits (red dots in (a)) and to identify topography unrelated to the radar-bright deposits such as central peak, crater walls, smaller impact craters (black dots in (a)).

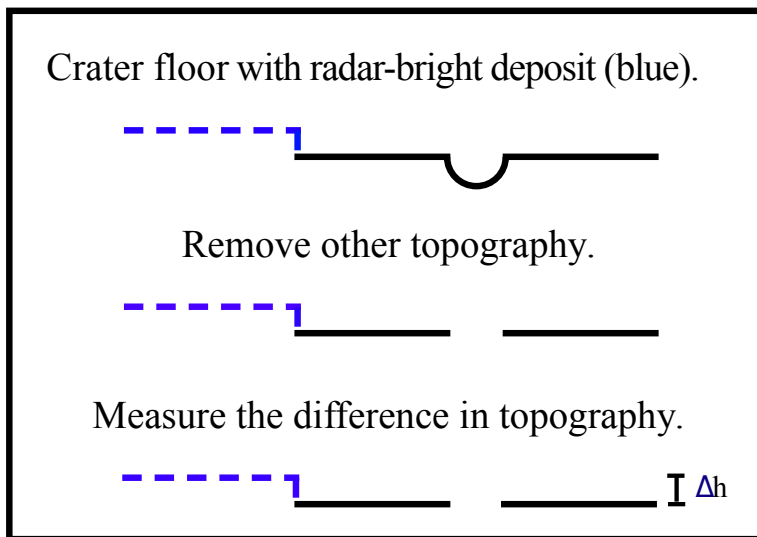


Figure 3: A schematic showing how the individual MLA tracks were filtered to remove topography unrelated to the background floor elevation and the radar bright region, to enable a measurement of the height of the radar-bright region (blue line). The difference between the crater floor that was radar-bright and the crater floor that was not radar-bright was averaged across each of their respective regions and the difference in topography was reported as Δh .

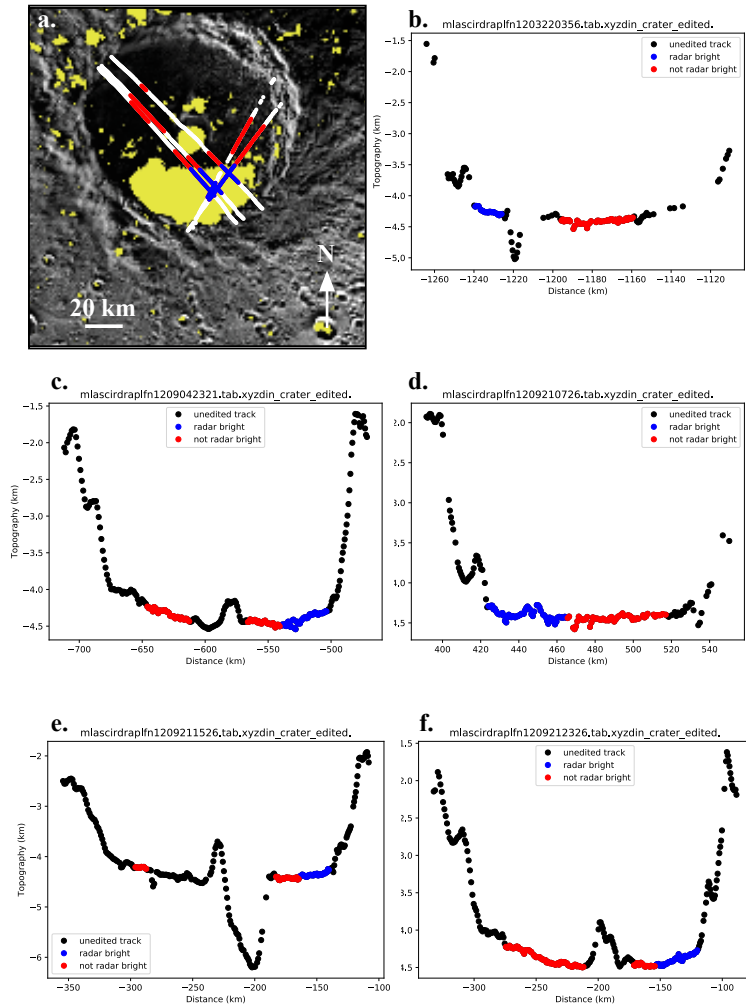


Figure 4: An MDIS base map (a) with 5 edited MLA tracks overlain for the crater Prokofiev. The yellow regions are the radar-bright regions. The white regions of the track are the portions of the track removed and the red and blue regions are the portions of the track retained after editing. The blue and red regions correspond to radar bright and non-radar bright regions respectively. The edited MLA profiles (b-f) use the same color scheme as (a) except that the portion of the tracks that were removed are shown as black rather than white dots. Figures S1-S3 show the same information for the craters Desprez, Petronius, and Yoshikawa. Similar plots for Desprez, Petronius, Yoshikawa and R1 are in the supplementary material (Figs S1-S4).

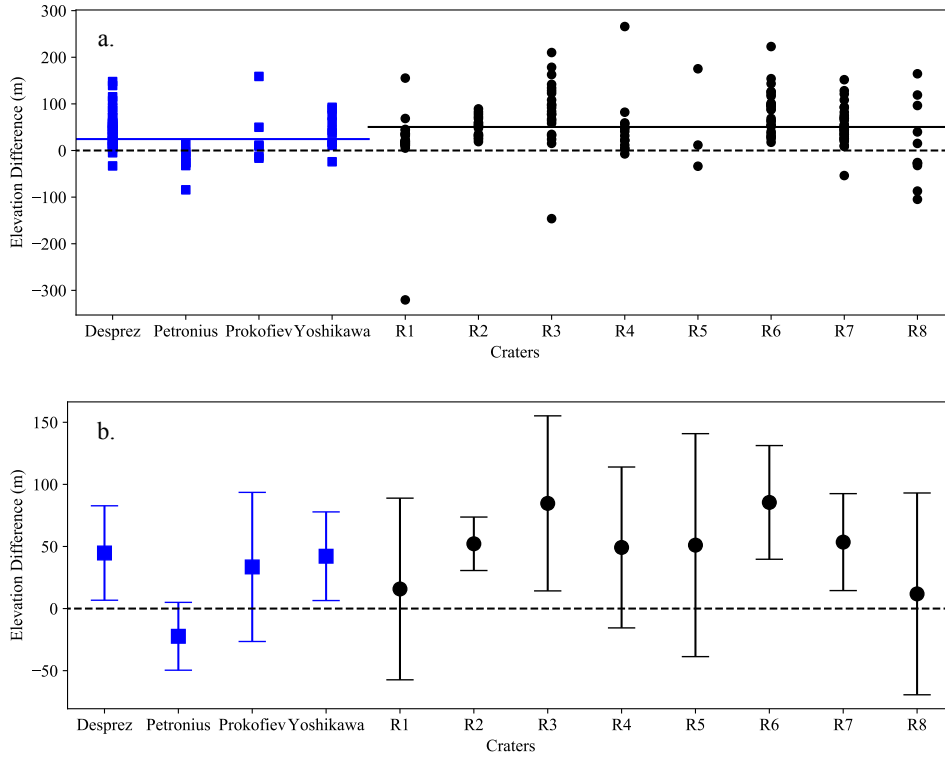


Figure 5: (a) The Δh for all MLA tracks measured for craters analyzed here that host radar-bright deposits (filled blue squares) and that do not host radar-bright deposits (filled black circles). Each point represents one Δh and the lines represent the means of the two populations. (b) The mean Δh and one standard deviation for each crater. The dotted lines in both figures represent the value if there were no difference in height between the two regions ($\Delta h = 0$).

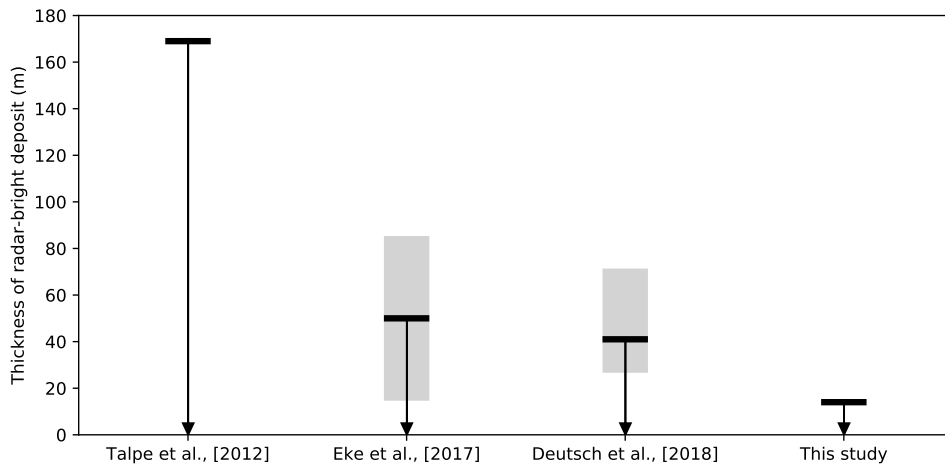


Figure 6: The range in thickness estimates for the radar-bright deposits for this study and past studies. The gray bars represent the reported error range for each study.

349 **Tables**

Table 1: Characteristics of the four radar-bright craters used in this study and the eight non-radar-bright craters used as an comparison. The freshness classification is from Kinczyk et al. (2018). The mean Δh and 1 standard deviation ($\pm 1\sigma$) are given for each crater.

Crater Name	Radar Bright?	Diameter (km)	Longitude (°E)	Latitude (°N)	Freshness Classification	Δh ($\pm 1\sigma$)	Number of MLA tracks
Desprez	yes	47	258.8	81.1	4	44 \pm 38	38
Petronius	yes	36	258.7	86.0	3	-22 \pm 27	8
Prokofiev	yes	112	62.9	85.8	4	36 \pm 60	5
Yoshikawa	yes	30	106.5	81.2	3	42 \pm 36	10
R1	no	43	153	72.9	4	16 \pm 73	26
R2	no	41	71	65.0	3	52 \pm 22	16
R3	no	89	297.4	61.2	3	85 \pm 70	22
R4	no	41	282.7	61.0	4	49 \pm 65	14
R5	no	41	43.4	66.0	3	51 \pm 90	3
R6	no	45	16.3	73.2	3	85 \pm 46	27
R7 (Stieglitz)	no	92	67.6	72.5	4	54 \pm 39	33
R8	no	82	309.1	69.0	3	12 \pm 81	11