P5.3 OBJECTIVE CLASSIFICATION OF AUSTRALIAN CLIMATES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Köppen’s scheme to classify world climates was developed by K. A. W. Köppen and was subsequently modified by W. Rudolf Koeppen. The climate classification is based on the concept that local vegetation is the best expression of climate and climate zone boundaries are not always the best basis for classification. Köppen and Geiger (1926) view climate classification in terms of the number of principal climate types in the world. The present paper presents a modification of Köppen’s scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Outline of the Köppen classification

The Köppen classification is based on the concept that native vegetation is the best expression of climate and climate zone boundaries are not always the best basis for classification. Köppen and Geiger (1926) view climate classification in terms of the number of principal climate types in the world. The present paper presents a modification of Köppen’s scheme.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Criticisms of the Köppen classification

Tretharn (1943) notes that Köppen’s classification has been criticized from various points of view. Thoresen (1951), Jones (1952), Ackerman (1942) rigid boundary criteria often lead to large discrepancies between climate subregions and features of the natural landscape. Some boundaries have been chosen largely with natural landscape features in mind, whereas others have been chosen largely with human experience of climate features in mind. Tretharan (1943) acknowledges the validity of these criticisms when he writes that “climatic boundaries, as seen on a map, even when precisely defined, are neither better nor worse than the human judgements that selected them, and the wisdom of those selections is always open to debate.” He emphasises, however, that such boundaries are always subject to change “with revision of boundary conditions (and that) ... such revisions have been made by Köppen himself and by other climatologists (see) ... Nevertheless, the telling evidence that the Köppen classification’s merits outweigh its deficiencies lies in its wide acceptance. Tretharan (1943) observes that “its’ descriptive climatic formulas are almost a common language among climate workers and geographers throughout the world ... (and that) ... its’ basic principles have been entirely corroborated (even) by those who have insisted upon making empirical classifications.”

Tretharan’s (1943) comments are as relevant today as they were a century ago (see, for example, Müller (1982); Lohmann et al (1993)).

3.2 Modifying the Köppen classification

For the aforementioned reasons, in modifying the Köppen classification, the present authors have chosen to only slightly depart from the original. Nevertheless, the additional classification of Köppen climates and some recombination of other Köppen climates may better reflect human experience of significant features. In recognition of the...
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5. REFERENCES
