Seasonality in intermittent streamflow losses beneath a Semiarid Wadi

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Abstract

Streamflow losses beneath non-perennial streams are potentially a major contribution to recharge, though measurements are often challenging due to the transient nature of these non-continuous (both spatially and temporally) streamflow. Significant investigative efforts for ephemeral streams have been described in literature, yet streams with intermittent streamflows lack this level of effort, particularly over an entire hydrological cycle. In this study, streambed water content and temperature were continuously logged over a year for an intermittent stream under semi-arid conditions in a wadi (arroyo) in Central Morocco. The results show that streambed water content and temperature are complementary data for identifying and classifying infiltration events, with respect to determining their duration, depth of water content increase and flow velocity within the sediments. Water content measurements easily allow distinguish between downward surface water percolation as well as upward groundwater wetting front. Over the entire year, the calculated total potential recharge based on temperature modeling was 425 mm. During winter and spring when the alluvium has a higher water moisture, this recharge is predominantly generated by floods. Normal streamflow generally generates low infiltration but contributes to wetting the sediment. During the summer, brief flashfloods over dry sediment result in shallower and slow wetting from infiltration, despite of their higher peak streamflows. Thus, for this wadi, there is clear seasonality (seasonal variation) in relations between amounts of streamflow, streamflow loss and depth of wetting into the streambed, as well as upward advance of wetting through deeper streambed sediments from groundwater receiving lateral mountain-front recharge.

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7 Key Points:

- Streambed water content and temperature were continuously monitored during an entire
 hydrological year to analyze water losses of an intermittent stream in semi-arid climate.
- Streamflow percolation and water table location were determined, indicating a high moisture level in the sediment during several months.
- Winter and spring floods lead to rapid infiltration resulting in high sediment water content, deep percolation and are the main source of groundwater recharge.
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- 15

16 Abstract

Streamflow losses beneath non-perennial, intermittent and ephemeral, streams are potentially a 17 major contribution to recharge, though measurements are often challenging due to the transient 18 nature of these non-continuous (both spatially and temporally) streamflow. Significant 19 investigative efforts for ephemeral streams have been described in literature, yet streams with 20 21 intermittent streamflows lack this level of effort, particularly over an entire hydrological cycle. 22 In this study, streambed water content and temperature were continuously logged over a year for an intermittent stream under semi-arid conditions in a wadi (arroyo) in Central Morocco. The 23 results show that streambed water content and temperature are complementary data for 24 identifying and classifying infiltration events, with respect to determining their duration, depth of 25 water content increase and flow velocity within the sediments. Water content measurements 26 27 easily allow distinguish between downward surface water percolation as well as upward groundwater wetting front. Over the entire year, the calculated total potential recharge based on 28 temperature modeling was 425 mm. During winter and spring when the alluvium has a higher 29 water moisture, this recharge is predominantly generated by floods. Normal streamflow 30 generally generates low infiltration but contributes to wetting the sediment. During the summer, 31 brief flashfloods over dry sediment result in shallower and slow wetting from infiltration, despite 32 of their higher peak streamflows. Thus, for this wadi, there is clear seasonality (seasonal 33 34 variation) in relations between amounts of streamflow, streamflow loss and depth of wetting into the streambed, as well as upward advance of wetting through deeper streambed sediments from 35 groundwater receiving lateral mountain-front recharge. 36

37 **1 Introduction**

38 In arid and semi-arid basins, surface-water resources are more focused than in more humid basins, and with increasing aridity with climate change streamflows and streamflow 39 losses are increasingly produced by ephemeral and intermittent streams. Both ephemeral and 40 intermittent streams channels are dry for extended periods, i.e., both are classified as 41 42 nonperennial (aka, seasonal) streams, with intermittent streams distinguished from ephemeral streams by intermittent stream channels distinct pools separated of dry channel and/or 43 44 streamflow reaches separated by sections of dry channel. For ephemeral streams, streamflow losses have been documented to represent a major component of alluvial aquifer recharge 45 (Niswonger et al., 2008); however, for intermittent streams their spatial and temporal dynamics 46 are inadequately documented (Cuthbert et al., 2016) and broad assessment continues to be 47 challenging from both a logistical and analytical perspectives. Ephemeral streams water losses 48 have been largely studied using temperature measurements and related analytical and numerical 49 50 modeling methods (Constantz et al., 1994; Constantz & Thomas, 1997; Ronan et al., 1998; Stonestrom & Constantz, 2003; Goodrich et al. 2004, Hoffmann et al., 2007; Kulongoski & 51 Izbicki, 2008, Rau et al. 2017). Much lesser studies have used water content as a tracer of 52 ephemeral stream losses (Dahan et al., 2007; Dahan et al., 2008; Schwartz, 2016). These research 53 works were in general stimulated by the role that ephemeral stream losses might play in surface 54 water-groundwater interactions and in groundwater recharge. When analyzing their context, 55 several other reasons might have contributed to the proliferation of research works on ephemeral 56 streams. First, being normally dry for most of the year and flow as floods only during and shortly 57 after precipitation events, ephemeral stream channels are less challenging for deployment of 58 equipment within the streambed before the arrival of a flood; flood events are unpredictable, 59 create scour and damage to equipment. Second, in dry and desert area since floods are rare and 60

have little seasonality, short monitoring and few measurements are generally sufficient to characterize the water losses and the recharge that is subsequently scarce and episodic. Third, since the ephemeral stream losses often occur in dry sediment under unsaturated conditions, their variation are not much influenced by pre-conditions of the sediment moisture; consequently, the infiltration and recharge behavior might present low seasonality. Finally, the early advances in flow modeling under variably saturated flow opened large perspectives of numerically quantifying ephemeral stream losses.

The difficulties in quantifying streamflow loss are greater with intermittent flow 68 compared with spatially continuous ephemeral flows. Intermittent streams are generally more 69 common in semi-arid regions, where the climate is dry in summer and autumn, and wet in winter 70 and spring. During dry seasons, intermittent streams are generally dry or flow after episodic 71 72 storms; consequently, their recharge pattern might be similar to ephemeral streams, occurring in dry and unsaturated sediment (Reid & Dreiss, 1990). In wet seasons, intermittent streams are fed 73 by rainfall or snowmelt, and may flow continuously or intermittently, thus, their stream losses 74 and recharge pattern might be expected to range between the spatial pattern of perennial stream 75 and ephemeral in addition to intermittent flow patterns. Furthermore, intermittent stream flow 76 during longer periods than ephemeral streams, potentially creating greater streambed infiltration, 77 streambed saturation and groundwater recharge. 78

79 For the present research, continuous streambed water content and streambed temperature were jointly monitored beneath a single intermittent stream channel, a wadi, in a semi-arid 80 81 Mediterranean climate. The goal was to continuously monitor streambed parameter designed investigate infiltrations processes and estimate the stream losses for an intermittent reach over an 82 entire water year as related to groundwater recharge beneath intermittent streams. A pair of 83 primary streambed measurement tools were deployed: continuous vertical streambed sediment 84 temperature profiling and continuous vertical sediment water content profiling. Using heat as a 85 tracer via temperature profiling has been shown to estimate streambed fluxes, while vertical 86 87 streambed water-content profiling provides crucial information on variations of hydraulic connection between the stream and the groundwater, with clear documentation of streamflow 88 89 losses converted to groundwater recharge. Water content also allows to easily measure the 90 velocity of the wetting front and infer infiltration fluxes; however, the method can only be used 91 when the streambed is initially unsaturated (Hoffmann et al., 2007; Dahan et al., 2008); once the sediment is fully saturated, it is no longer possible to calculate infiltration fluxes. Using 92 93 temperature as a tracer of stream losses is more useful in estimating water fluxes in various moisture regimes. Indeed, heat continues to be widely used thanks to technological developments 94 that made temperature acquisition devices rigid, easy to install and inexpensive (Anderson, 2005; 95 Kalbus et al., 2006, Constantz 2008, Shanafield & Cook, 2014), and to the development of 96 97 various methods and models that use temperature data series (Anderson, 2005; Blasch et al., 2007; Kurylyk et al., 2019). 98

Discussed in detail in other sections below, after identifying the hydrological events (streamflow occurrence) at the experimental site based on the near surface sediment temperature and flow gauge data, analyzing the stream losses beneath the streambed were determined at a single vertical streambed profile to a depth 5.5 m continuously over an entire 1-year period. The resulting records were used in a 1-dimensionl heat transport model to calculate the potential recharge rates. The specific goals of this study were: 1) describe the seasonal change in the sediment moisture and temperature according to the streamflow losses, 2) analyze the effect of the sediment moisture on the infiltration processes, 3) determine the seasonal variation of the subsequent potential groundwater recharge and 4) possibly investigate any impact of lateral mountain-front recharge on hydraulic connection beneath the channel. All four were able to be addressed to varying degrees during hydrologic events over one year for this single wadi.

110 2 Study area

The study area belongs the Tensift basin in Central Morocco, which is a typical southern Mediterranean basin (Jarlan et al., 2015). It is located in a piedmont area and is bordered by the High-Atlas Mountains in the south. The climate is characterized by hot and dry periods in summer and autumn, whereas the winter and spring are associated with precipitation, as rainfall and mountain snow, with milder temperatures.

116 The experimental site is located in the middle of the active channel of the Wadi Rheraya stream. The Wadi Rheraya is one of the main streams coming from the High-Atlas mountain. Its 117 mountain watershed is 227 km², culminating at Jbel Toubkal at 4167 m. Precipitation within the 118 watershed is monitored by 6 rain gauges. The average annual precipitation is 400 mm. The 119 120 streamflow is monitored since 1962 at Tahanaout gauge station. The average annual streamflow is 1.55 m³/s. There is a large variability in streamflow in space and time. The stream has a nival-121 pluvial regime and snowmelt contributions are important in spring and early summer (Hajhouji 122 et al., 2018). Below the gauge station, a part of the runoff is used for irrigation, mainly olive and 123 wheat crops. The alluvial aquifer in the area is formed by alluvial fans and fluviatile deposits of 124 Neogene and Quaternary age. It is recharged mainly by high-elevation meteoric water (Boukhari 125 126 et al., 2015). Within Rheraya streambed (Figure 1), at the surface the alluvium is formed of rollers, sandy gravel, and boulders with different sizes. Clay layers are usually deposited by 127 floods. At the experimental site, the water table at the start of the experiment located at 5.5 m 128 depth. 129

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Figure 1: On left, photograph showing the Wadi Rheraya streambed, with in the background thefoothills of the High-Atlas Mountains. On right, schematic cross-section of the instrumentation

134 with the temperature probes (4 self-contained temperature probes at the top surface and 12 across

the unsaturated zone) and water content probes (4 Thetaprobes) at different depths. Groundwater
was found at 5.5 m below the streambed at the onset of the experiment (November 04, 2013).

137 **3 Materials and Methods**

138 3.1 Streamflow detection

Stream gauges are required to monitor streamflow. However, those stations are expensive 139 to install and maintain, and not always effective because of the flashy and destructive nature of 140 streamflow events especially in ephemeral channels (Constantz & Thomas 1997). The 141 installation of a series of temperature probes at the near surface of streams was successfully used 142 in different studies to detect the presence, extent and duration of streamflow (Blasch et al., 2000; 143 Constantz et al., 2002; Blasch et al., 2004; Mendez, 2005; Moore, 2007; Stewart-Deaker et al., 144 2007; Stonestrom et al., 2007). As there is only one gauging station located 8 km upstream of the 145 experimental site, and the streamflow recorded at this station does not always reach the study 146 site, we used a temperature-based method to detect the presence of streamflow and its duration at 147 148 the site. Therefore, four self-contained temperature sensors (Lascar Electronics) were installed at the surface of the sediment across the streambed (Figure 1). Air temperature was also recorded to 149 distinguish between streamflow events and cold fronts. Each sensor recorded temperature every 150 30 minutes from 11/04/2013 to 11/21/2014. We analyzed the thermographs by visual inspection 151 (as detailed in paragraph 4.2) to detect the perturbation of the temperature at the sediment surface 152 caused by water flowing through the stream and therefore to determine the number of streamflow 153 events and their duration. 154

155 3.2 Measurements of changes in sediment water content and temperature

The experiment was designed to vertically monitor the downward movement of 156 intermittent streamflow beneath the semi-arid Wadi Rheraya (Figure 1). The experiment profile 157 was installed in the middle of the active channel that drains water even during periods of low 158 flow. At the start of the experimentation, the water table was located at 5.5 m below the surface 159 of the Wadi Rheraya streambed. Hence, to monitor the volumetric water content of the sediment, 160 four Thetaprobes (Delta-T Devices) were installed at 1, 2, 3 and 4 m. To measure temperature, 161 12 temperature probes (Cambell Scientific) were installed every 0.5 m to record the sediment 162 temperature. The probes were connected to a data logger (Cambell Scientific) placed on the right 163 stream bank and powered by a solar panel. Data were recorded every 30 minutes. The 164 measurement period was from November 04, 2013 to November 21, 2014. At the end of this 165 period, a strong flood (60 m^3/s) caused serious damages to the set up. 166

167 3.3 Calculating vertical infiltration fluxes with 1-Dimensional model of heat transfer

Temperature data were used together with the physical, hydraulic, and thermal properties of the alluvium, to construct a 1-dimentional model to simulate heat transfer beneath the Wadi Rheraya streambed. The computer program VS2DH (Healy & Ronan, 1996), pre- and postprocessed by 1DTemPro (Koch et al., 2016), a finite difference-based model designed to solve heat transport problems in variably saturated media, was used to infer vertical water fluxes. A form of the advection-dispersion equation is used within VS2DH to describe heat and groundwater transport (Healy and Ronan, 1996):

$$[\theta C_{w} + (1 - \phi)C_{s}]\frac{\partial T}{\partial t} = \nabla . K_{T}(\theta)\nabla T + \nabla . \theta C_{w}D_{h}\nabla T - \nabla . \theta C_{w}qT + QC_{w}T'$$

176		The temporal change in sediment temperature at a given depth	Heat conduction (Fourier's law)	Heat dispersion	Heat advection (Darcy's law)	Heat source /sink	(1)
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time in s;

(2)

 Θ is the volumetric moisture content (dimensionless); ϕ is the sediment porosity (dimensionless); Cw is the volumetric heat capacity (density*specific heat) of water (J m⁻³ °C⁻¹); Cs is the volumetric heat capacity of bulk sediment (J m⁻³ °C⁻¹); T is temperature (°C); K_T is bulk thermal conductivity (W m⁻³ °C⁻¹); D_h is the thermomechanical dispersion tensor (m² s⁻¹); q is water velocity (m s⁻¹); Q is rate of water added per volume of porous medium from an external or internal source (s⁻¹); T' is temperature of fluid source (°C).

The main physical parameters were assessed at the site. Across the unsaturated zone of the experiment site, four sediment samples, of about 5 kg each, were taken at every m depth to characterize the sediment texture and infer the hydraulic conductivity. Particle-size distribution parameters were determined by sieve analysis (Landon et al, 2001). The hydraulic conductivity was estimated from the formula of Alyamani and Sen (1993) which is based on the slope and intercept of the grain-size distribution curve. This formula (equation 2) was tested by Landon et al (2001) against other techniques and showed a good agreement.

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$$K = 1300 \left[I_0 + 0.025 \left(d_{50} - d_{10} \right) \right]^2$$

The effective porosity of the sediments was estimated based on the water content measured by the Tethaprobes installed at various depths, and is defined here as the difference between the quasi-saturated water content and the field capacity (Heppner et al., 2007), where quasi-saturation is nearly saturated with a small amount of air trapped in the pore space.

The thermal properties (sediment heat capacity, thermal conductivity, and dispersivity) of streambed sediments are almost independent of texture and vary only little between different streambeds (Constantz and Stonestrom, 2003). These parameters generally vary from 1.1 10^6 to 2.9 10^6 (J m⁻³ °C⁻¹) for sediment heat capacity, and from 0.2 to 2.2 (W m⁻¹ °C⁻¹) for thermal conductivity and 0.01 to 1 for dispersivity (Pahud, 2002; Niswonger & Prudic, 2003; Kulongoski & Izbicki, 2008).

202 The model domain is a column that extends vertically from the streambed surface to a depth of 6 m. The model domain was divided in five layers of specific thickness and physical 203 characteristics. Twelve (12) observation points of temperature were centered horizontally in the 204 vertical column. The domain was divided in 100 active cells spanning the distance between the 205 206 uppermost and the deepest thermistor. The measured temperatures were used to initialize the model but afterwards the temperature of the uppermost thermistor was used as the boundary 207 condition at the top of the domain, and temperature of the deepest thermistor as the boundary 208 condition at the bottom of the domain. The active cells are surrounded by no-flow boundaries. 209 The simulation period was 12 months and each time step was 30 minutes. 210

The model was calibrated based on a manual-trial and error method, which is considered appropriate for 1-Dimentional modelling (Niswonger & Prudic, 2003, Moore, 2007; Kulongoski & Izbicki, 2008). Model calibration in the context of using heat as a tracer usually requires the adjustment of hydraulic conductivity (K) or head difference (H) until the simulated temperature match the measured one. In our case study, we used the estimated K from grain-size distribution curve and adjusted H taking into account the maximum stream stage values of floods reported

from the experiment site. Best fit of simulated temperature-depth profiles to observed ones was 217 218 determined by minimizing the RMSE (Root Mean Square Error).

4 Results 219

4.1 Sediments characteristics 220

The grain size analysis of the sediment samples from various depths shows (Table1) that 221 the sediments are mostly composed of gravel (2000> μ m) and coarse sand (250-2000 μ m). 222 223 Among the fine materials, clay (<2 µm) constitutes an important fraction. Sediments from the first and the fifth meters have more coarse material while the second and the third meters have 224 225 more fine material. The estimated hydraulic conductivity values from grain size analysis vary from 6 10^{-5} to 4 10^{-4} m/s (Tab. 1). They are relatively low but are in good agreement with other 226 reported for the area (Sinan & Razack, 2006). On the streambed surface floods generally deposit 227 clay sediments that forms a thin layer with a thickness ranging from millimeters to several 228 centimeters. This clogging layer is likely to reduce the hydraulic conductivity of the very shallow 229 sediments. In addition, the presence of boulders could further reduce the permeability of the 230 sediment. 231

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Table 1. The Results of Grain Size Analysis of Four Samples Taken from Various Depths in the
Experiment Site and Estimated Hydraulic Conductivity.

Depth (m)	Gravel (>2000 μm)	Coarse sand (250-2000 µm)	Fine sand (50-250 µm)	Silt (2-50 µm)	Clay (<2 µm)	Hydraulic conductivity (m/s)	
1	58.3	27.4	5.1	0.5	8.7	4 10 ⁻⁵	
2	41.9	34.9	9.4	0.7	13.1	6 10 ⁻⁵	
3	32.7	41.1	11	1.1	13.3	1 10-4	
5	47.2	30.2	9.5	0.8	12.2	4 10 ⁻⁴	

The effective porosity of the sediment was deduced from the measured water content 238 data. The results (Table 2) show that the effective porosity at 2m and 3m (0.18 % – 0.20 %) 239 depth is lower than this at 1m and 4m (0.27 % - 0.30%). 240

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 Table 2. Calculation of the Effective Porosity in the Study Site Using Water Content.

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245 246	Tethaprobe number	Depth (m)	Part of sediment represented (m)	Min of water content (%)	Max of water content (%)	Estimated effective porosity (%)
247	H1	1	0 - 1.5	0.13	0.43	0.30
248	H2	2	1.5 - 2.5	0.27	0.44	0.18
249	Н3	3	2.5 - 3.5	0.26	0.46	0.20
251	H4	4	3.5 - 6.5	0.22	0.49	0.27

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4.2 Detection of streamflow events

254 As streamflow was not directly monitored at the experimental site, the surface-streambed temperature is used to determine the effective occurrence of streamflow and flood events 255 (Constantz et al., 2001; Blasch et al., 2004). Streambed temperature is normally influenced by 256 seasonal and diurnal air temperature. The minimum recorded temperature was 8.8 °C in January 257 2014 and the maximum was 34 °C in August 2014. Abrupt changes in streambed temperature are 258 due to streamflow events or a change in atmospheric conditions (Constantz et al., 2001). Figure 2 259 presents a detailed inspection of a perturbation : After a decrease in the daily streambed-260 temperature fluctuation by 5 °C (Figure 2a) due to the decrease in air temperature by 8 °C 261 (Figure 2b), the effect of the streamflow event of September 21st, 2014 is reflected by a 262 perturbation (temperature drop) of sinusoidal shape of the daily streambed-temperature 263 thermographs. The described perturbation is related to a rainfall event and to a flood recorded at 264 the Tahanaout gauging station (Figure 2c). The start of the thermal anomaly is considered as the 265 initiation of the event and the increase of diurnal variation of temperature is considered as the 266 recession of the event (Constantz et al., 2001). 267

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Figure 2: Procedure of detecting thermal anomalies based on near-surface temperature (a) and air temperature records (b). Their superposition to measured data of runoff or precipitation (c) allowed determining the type of the hydrological events that generated the perturbations.

The visual inspection of the surface-streambed thermographs led to the identification of 31 thermal anomalies (Figure 3). According to the gauging station data, 4 events were related to normal streamflow (defined here as flow $\leq 1.55 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$ that is the average runoff at the gauge station) and 11 were related to floods (defined as flow > 2*1.55 m³/\text{s}). The other events (16 events) are ungauged events (Tab. 3); they could correspond either to rainfall or to flow from small ungauged reaches located below the gauging station.



Figure 3: Near-surface thermographs to detect streamflow presence and duration at the experiment site. The bands represent the thermal anomalies that were related to hydrological events.

Table 3 : Type of the Detected Streamflow Losses Events and their Depth. The Rows in Bold Correspond
 to the Potential Recharge Events

The Detected infiltration events									
Number	Date	Rain (mm)	Measured streamflow m ³ /s	Туре	Recorded depth of perturbation (m)				
1	11/17/2013	0.7		Ungauged	0.5				
2	11/25/2013	10.2		Ungauged	0.5				
3	12/16/2013	1.0		Ungauged	0.5				
4	12/20/2013	3.1		Ungauged	0.5				
5	12/28/2013	7.5		Ungauged	0.5				
6	1/10/2014	1.4		Ungauged	0.5				
7	1/17/2014	10.8		Ungauged	0.5				
8	1/22/2014	19.6	0.48	Normal flow	2				
9	1/29/2014	34.8	9.40	Flood	5.5				
10	2/10/2014	14.5	0.24	Normal flow	3.5				
11	2/16/2014	8.6		Ungauged	3.5				
12	2/24/2014	0.1		Ungauged	0.5				
13	3/12/2014	45.0	44.80	Flood	5.5				
14	3/28/2014	20.0	8.10	Flood	5.5				
15	4/2/2014	17.6	7.76	Flood	2.5				
16	4/21/2014	31.0	34.80	Flood	5.5				
17	5/2/2014	8.1	0.15	Normal flow	2				
18	5/6/2014	1.2		Ungauged	2				
19	19 5/8/2014		0.15	Normal flow	2.5				
20	5/16/2014	0.8		Ungauged	2				
21	5/22/2014	1.8		Ungauged	1				
22	6/6/2014	0.6		Ungauged	0.5				
23	8/27/2014	17.2	27.50	Flood	1.0				
24	8/30/2014	20.0	42.70	Flood	1.0				
25	9/17/2014	0.4		Ungauged	1				
26	9/21/2014	25.0	19.00	Flood	4				
27	10/12/2014	0.2		Ungauged	0.5				
28	10/29/2014	2.6		Ungauged	1				
29	11/4/2014	28.6	24.00	Flood	5.5				
30	11/9/2014	23.0	36.00	Flood	5.5				
31	11/21/2014	1.6	60.00	Flood	5.5				

All the measured floods at the gauging station were detected at the site. Most of them occurred in the wet period. The two floods in late August in response to summer storms could be considered as flashfloods since they lasted no more than 6.5 hours. The largest flood ($60 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$) in November 21, 2014 caused massive damage to our experiment.

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4.3 Water content changes

Water content (WC) changes were monitored over 1 years' time, every 30 minutes, every 1m depth interval, 4 m beneath the streambed surface. The general evolution of WC could be divided in 2 moisture states of the sediment (Fig. 4): (i) wet sediment state during 5 months (February 2014 to June 2014), the WC values increase progressively from the surface to the bottom of the sediment, and (ii) dry sediment state during 3 months (from July to September 2014).

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Figure 4: Water content data measured at four depths (1 to 4 m), 1 m apart, beneath the Rheraya streambed. The bands represent the events that led to streamflow losses; the blue ones indicate potential recharge events.

During the wet sediment period, the moisture state of the sediment seems not only due to 308 streamflow losses. Figure 5 presents the WC variation in the vadose zone before, during and 309 after the first flood of January 29, 2014. The probes show different behaviors. WC at the probes 310 1 and 2 increased by the same magnitude (4%). At probe 3, first the WC increased to 36 % then 311 after a short slowdown it increased to a maximum of 43.6%. Second, the highest rise in WC was 312 313 observed at the probe 4 installed at 4 m depth, where WC increased to 46.5%. Notably the WC increased at 4 m (probe 4) before increasing at 3 m (probe 3), suggesting that the quasi-saturation 314 at 4 m depth m was caused by the rise of the water table. The latter led to wetting conditions 315 from the bottom that reached with a delay the probe 3 as well. In summary, the increase of WC 316 at 1m and 2m depth as well as the first increase at 3m were due to streamflow losses, while the 317 increase of WC at 4m and the second increase at 3m were due the rise of the water table. 318



Figure 5: Time series of the water content variation during the event of January 29, 2014. The water content at 4 m increased before the one at 3m, indicating the rise of the water table. At 3m, the first increase in WC could be due to water percolation from the surface and the second to the rise of the water table.

During the wet sediment period, the WC fluctuates significantly in the upper part of the sediment, while remaining stable at a quasi-saturation level at 3 m and 4 m depth. Consequently, the WC at the upper part of the sediment was induced by streamflow losses inducing sharp increases, and at the bottom of the sediment it was maintained by the groundwater. In early summer, a general decrease of water content in the sediment was observed (Fig. 4). The decrease was abrupt at 3 m and 4 m depth marking the drop of the water table. A more progressive decrease at 1 m and 2 m depth indicates a normal drying of the sediment.

332 4.4 Streambed-sediments temperature analysis

Temperature at very shallow depths (0.25 m and 0.5 m) is influenced by both diurnal and 333 seasonal variations, while the temperatures of the deepest probes show a slight seasonal variation 334 (Figure 6). Overall, the general shape of the thermographs is sinusoidal with the lowest recorded 335 temperatures in the winter and the highest temperatures in summer. From November 2013 to 336 March 2014, temperature increases with depth. From April 2014, the temperature gradient 337 shifted. Streamflow losses induced temperature declines more frequent during winter and spring 338 than summer. The perturbations of temperature induced by the floods are more obvious. The 339 magnitude of the temperature drop was up to 7 °C (floods of March 12, 2014 and November 4, 340 2014) at the upper temperature probes and up to 2 °C at the deeper probes (flood of November 4, 341 342 2014).

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Figure 6: Streambed temperature measured at 12 depths (up to 5.5 m), 0.5 m apart, beneath the Rheraya streambed. The bands represent the streamflow losses events; the blue ones indicate the potential recharge events.

4.5 Delineating potential recharging events

During the one year of monitoring of the sediment temperature and water content, 351 31streamflow infiltration events were identified (Tab. 3). They correspond to 11 floods, 4 normal 352 streamflow and 16 rainfall/ungauged reach flow. For 9 floods (out of 11), 2 normal streamflow 353 and 1 ungauged event, almost all in the wet period, deep water percolation (beyond 2.5 m depth) 354 was recorded (Table 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 6). Because the water table was maintained around 3 m depth 355 during the wet period, these events are considered to have recharged the groundwater. The two 356 flashfloods in the late August 2014 (N° 23, 24) only led to a temperature and moisture change at 357 1.0 m depth despite their high flowrate, and are therefore not considered as generating deep 358 percolation. Therefore, the potential recharge events are in general those floods that occurred in 359 wet sediment conditions. 360

361 4.6 Numerical modeling of heat for recharging events

Using the elaborated VS2DH model, the recharge events were modeled by matching 362 observed temperature to simulated one, until reaching the best fit between observed and 363 simulated temperature (Fig. 7). The RMSE for each event is listed in table 4. The RMSE values 364 vary between 0.1 and 0.9 $^{\circ}$ C which seems very acceptable owing to various uncertainties related 365 to this type of modeling. In our case, the main sources of uncertainty could be the scarce data on 366 streamflow stage and by the assumptions related to the one-dimensional vertical model, which 367 does not consider lateral flow derived from infiltration beyond the vertical model's domain (Rau 368 369 et al, 2014).

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Figure 7: Observed versus simulated temperature at different depths, for the whole study period.

The recharge fluxes that are calculated by VS2DH correspond to the flowrate of water through the streambed per unit of streambed surface area ($m^3 m^{-2} s^{-1}$). They vary between 0.03 and 4.65 mm/h with a mean of 1.7 mm/h. The highest flux of 4.7 mm/h corresponds to the large flood of November 21, 2014 while the lowest flux of 0.03 mm/h corresponds to the low streamflow event of February 16, 2014 (Tab. 5).

Table 4: Percolation fluxes calculated by VS2DH heat modeling.

Event	a, a	Tune	Start	End	Duration (h)	Fluxes (mm/h)			RMSE	Total
number	m3/s	туре	Start	End		Min	Max	Mean	(°C)	(mm)
9	9.4	Flood	1/29/2014 20:30	1/31/2014 16:00	44	0.14	0.86	0.82	0.20	36
10	0.24	Normal flow	2/10/2014 7:00	11/2/2014 16:00	33.5	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.06	1
11	-	Ungauged	2/16/2014 01:00	2/18/2014 13:00	60.5	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.15	2
13	44.8	Flood	3/12/2014 23:00	3/14/2014 00:30	26	0.14	3.69	3.28	0.62	85
14	8.1	Flood	3/28/2014 21:00	3/30/2014 12:30	40	0.10	0.27	0.26	0.15	10
15	7.76	Flood	4/2/2014 13:00	3/4/2014 10:00	21.5	0.20	0.21	0.21	0.04	4
16	34.8	Flood	4/21/2014 19:30	4/22/2014 14:00	19	0.04	2.30	2.13	0.26	40
19	0.15	Normal flow	5/8/2014 22:30	5/10/2014 19:30	45.5	0.33	1.18	1.08	0.12	49
26	19	Flood	9/21/2014 10:00	9/22/2014 16:30	31	0.25	1.00	0.95	0.10	29
29	24	Flood	4/11/2014 23:30	6/11/2014 18:30	43.5	0.56	1.74	1.63	0.12	71
30	36	Flood	9/11/2014 17:30	12/11/2014 9:00	64	0.54	2.58	2.47	0.91	158
31	60	Flood	11/21/2014 08:00	11/21/2014 13:00	5.5	4.63	4.66	4.65	0.36	26

389

390 **5. Discussion**

391

5.1. Near surface temperature as a proxy to infer streamflow presence and duration

Wadi Rheraya is characterized by intermittent streamflow driven by rainfall storm and 392 snowmelt (Hajhouji et al, 2018). As the Tahanaout gaging station is located several kilometers 393 upstream the experiment site, we examined the effectiveness of using temperature to detect the 394 presence and duration of streamflow in this context. 31 thermal anomalies of the surface-395 streambed temperature were isolated. 11 events were related to gauged floods, 04 to gauged 396 397 normal streamflow, and 16 to rainfall or ungauged flow from reaches located below the gauging station. Temperature records at the near surface streambed sediment have detected the 398 occurrence of hydrological events, but were insufficient alone to detect the type of the 399 hydrological events. Using runoff measurements even far from the study site was necessary to 400 help distinguish between different types of events. However, temperature records at the near 401 surface streambed sediment was very useful to measure the duration of each detected event. 402

5.2. The insights from coupling water content and temperature data to study streamflowlosses

405 In this research, the water content change method was revealed more practical for recording and visualizing the downward surface water infiltration (Fig. 4) and particularly to 406 detect in the deepest probes the upward wetting front in response to groundwater rise (Fig. 5). 407 The drop of the water table was also distinguishable through an abrupt dewatering of the deep 408 sediment while the normal drying of the top sediment generates a more progressive decrease of 409 the water content due to evaporation and low infiltration. Such processes would have been 410 difficult to detect only with temperature variation. However, during near saturation conditions of 411 sediments at 3m and 4 m depth, the water content method was less efficient in analyzing 412 percolation as the induced changes were barely noticeable. This was the reason that the water 413 content variation was used in other studies (Dahan et al., 2007; Dahan et al., 2008; Hoffmann et 414

al., 2007) to assess infiltration only at the onset of infiltration events, during unsaturated conditions.

The occurrence of streamflow losses induces abrupt and obvious temperature 417 perturbations (Fig. 6) regardless of the water content conditions of the sediment, due to advective 418 heat transfer following the downwards movements of water (Constantz & Thomas, 1996, 1997). 419 420 Sediment temperature responds to streamflow losses by a net decrease due to the cooler water coming from high elevations of the High-Atlas Mountains. In our case representing an 421 intermittent streamflow under semi-arid climate, during one year of monitoring, 31 streamflow 422 infiltration events were identified. This is guite different from the ephemeral streams generally 423 characterized by a much lower number of events that are restricted to episodic intensive rainfall 424 events (Blasch et al., 2004; Stewart-Deaker et al., 2007; Dahan et al., 2008; Schwartz, 2016). 425

426 5.3. The water table variation

For Wadi Rheraya, sediment water-content data indicates the first rise of groundwater 427 was not caused by the vertical infiltration at the wadi experimental site, but rather by lateral 428 429 recharge that raised the ground water elevation upwards through the streambed sediments. The water table beneath the wadi remained elevated during late winter, spring and early summer. 430 During this period, the top streambed sediment was variably saturated, while near saturation 431 conditions were maintained at lower elevations in the sediments. The water table declined to 432 lower elevations beneath the wadi during summer and autumn, as a result of lack of recharge due 433 to generally dry conditions and the lack of recharge from brief summer flow events. This annual 434 435 water table elevation change is consistent with groundwater variation in intermittent stream alluvial aquifers in mountain front areas under Mediterranean climate (Leduc, et al. 2016; 436 Bioumouass, et al. 2020). In winter and spring, the water table increases due to high recharge 437 from high flows from rainfall and snowmelt, and low discharge. In summer and autumn, the 438 water table decreases due to low or absent groundwater recharge, and high groundwater 439 discharge to satisfy moisture depletion down gradient. 440

441 5.4. Deep percolation fluxes

442 For this specific wadi study for a single water year, the analysis of combined streambed temperature profiles with streambed water-content profiles, lead to the following results. The 443 444 interpreted result for this wadi is: 9 of 11 large streamflow (flood) events generated groundwater recharge, 1 of 4 baseflow (normal) streamflow events generated ground water recharge and 1 of 445 9 ungauged rainfall events generated groundwater recharge. For the events interpreted as 446 groundwater recharge, all of these events appeared from analysis of the profiles to generate deep 447 percolation surpassing 2 m depth, and importantly, all of these recharging events occurred in the 448 wet season. 449

A key finding for Wadi Rheraya is similar streamflow events generated varying 450 streamflow losses, i.e., there was seasonality (seasonal variation) in streamflow losses for similar 451 flows. This seasonality of streamflow versus streamflow-losses relation was shown to be based 452 on pre-existing hydrologic conditions prior to individual flow events. The rainfall/ungauged 453 reach flow and the normal flow seemed to be too low to generate any deep percolation, with the 454 latter was almost generated by floods. As examples of large high-flow rate events failing to 455 generate recharge, examination of a pair of flood events during late August; despite their 456 magnitude both events generated shallow infiltration (1 m deep) resulting in no recharge. This is 457

explained by both pre-existing wadi conditions and their flashy (high flow rate, short duration) 458 characteristics resuling in short-duration infiltration into a dry streambed sediment. To estimate 459 the role of pre-existing sediment water content of on the infiltration process, the maximum 460 velocities of the advance of the wetting front during infiltration were calculated using the time of 461 the first indication of a water content increase at a given probe. They show that the advance of 462 the wetting front is significantly faster in wet sediment (from 19 cm/hour to 330 cm/hour) than in 463 dry sediment (from 3 cm/hour to 9 cm/hour). This demonstrates in a quantitative manner that wet 464 sediments may be orders of magnitude more favorable for deep percolation and recharge for a 465 winter flow event compared with a summer flow event. 466

For Wadi Rheraya, summarizing the annual variation recharge based on calculated deep 467 percolation fluxes related to the potential recharge events, a vertical 1-dimentional modeling 468 approach was constructed using the heat and water transport model VS2DH. Deep percolation 469 rates varied from 0.03 to 4.7 mm/h with an average of 1.7 mm/h. The cumulative flux per event 470 varied from 1 mm to 158 mm (Tab. 5). Over the one-year experiment, the total percolation 471 amount estimated as 459 mm/year. Almost the entire deep percolation, approximately 90%, 472 occurred during wet period flood events. For baseflow (normal) flow events, percolation was 473 generally low. 474

5.5. The pattern of streamflow losses

Hence, the depth and magnitude of the stream losses depend on the streamflow type and 476 the moisture conditions of the sediment, factors that assign a seasonality to groundwater 477 478 recharge. During winter and spring, the recharge is performed mainly by floods. The normal flow generally generates low and shallow infiltration, however contributing to maintain wet 479 conditions at the upper part of the sediment that enhance the percolation conditions. Indeed, high 480 streambed water content greatly enhances potential recharge due to higher hydraulic 481 conductivities and less unsaturated pore volume to absorb event-generated percolation. During 482 the dry period, the scarcity of the streamflow and the dry state of the sediment are much less 483 favorable to recharge. Furthermore, despite the intermittent flow regime fed by the mountain 484 water, due to the semi-arid conditions a significant flow volume is likely diverted to irrigation, 485 reducing the potential of in-stream recharge (Bouimouass et al., 2020). 486

The sediment moisture data showed that along the study period, no steady saturated hydraulic connection was achieved between the stream and the water table. The sediment above the water table evolved as a variably saturated flow system, and temporal pattern of the groundwater recharge remained transient and dominated by separated recharging events.

491 6 Conclusions

For wadis and other stream channels with intermittent streams in arid and semiarid 492 basins, streamflow losses may be important sources of groundwater recharge; however, it is 493 more challenging to directly measure recharge than even in ephemeral streams. As a 494 495 consequence, this study utilized a unique coupling of continuous monitoring of streambed sediment temperature profiles and sediment water-content profiles, for successful, indirect 496 estimates of streambed deep percolation and recharge beneath Wadi Rheraya during an entire 497 hydrological year. However, streamflow monitoring at a gauging station even far from the 498 experiment site, was necessary to determine the type of the hydrological events (flood, normal 499 flow or flow from isolated ungauged reach). Streambed water content allowed monitoring of the 500

501 moisture conditions of the sediment and to detect downward surface water infiltration and the 502 movements of groundwater table. The streambed temperature records provided insightful 503 information about the depth and the duration of the infiltration from streamflow. Furthermore, 504 the vertical streambed water content profiles lead to parsing at the start of the wet season whether 505 groundwater recharge was created by deep percolation or from lateral inflow beneath the wadi 506 probably derived from mountain-front recharge.

In this study, non-recharging versus potentially recharging events were distinguished 507 according to the stream water infiltration depth. The floods of winter and spring appear to be the 508 main source of groundwater recharge. The normal streamflow or rainfall during the wet period 509 generate low and superficial infiltration but contribute to the wetting of the sediment. During the 510 dry period, the dry sediment and probably the flashy character of the floods, limit the infiltration 511 and therefore subsequent groundwater recharge. In summary, this study demonstrated clear 512 seasonality relations between streamflow magnitude and streamflow loss amounts and 513 percolation depth magnitude, that manifested different streambed moisture response for similar 514 streamflow winter and spring events compared with summer and fall events in the channel of 515 Wadi Rheraya. Furthermore, this study revealed a lateral recharge derived from mountain-front 516 recharge. 517

518

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