Direction Reconstruction of IceCube Neutrino Events with Millipede

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Abstract

To conduct neutrino astronomy with the IceCube detector at the South Pole, the direction of the incoming neutrino must be known accurately to within one degree. When a muon neutrino interacts in the ice at the South Pole, it produces a muon which produces Cherenkov light as it travels through the detector. Using the direction of the muon, the direction of the original neutrino can be determined and used for astronomy. Millipede is an algorithm used to numerically determine the properties of the muon track by making predictions about the light signal seen in the detector and checking how this compares to the observed signal using a likelihood maximisation.

With this algorithm, the muon track direction is expected to be resolved to within one degree. However, problems have been encountered with simulated muons where millipede finds a direction which is very different from the true direction or millipede fails to reconstruct the event. After analysis of the likelihood grid scans of some of these events, the problems with millipede seem to be due to the minimiser finding a local minimum in the likelihood surface rather than the desired global minimum. These local minima arise from fluctuations in the likelihood surface. These fluctuations were observed in all dimensions including track position.

The source of these fluctuations was investigated in simulations by first using millipede’s predictions as the input waveforms. Poisson fluctuations were then added and produced a less accurate likelihood scan with more fluctuations. Finally, the effect of photomultiplier after-pulses was investigated by removing all signal more than 3μs after the median time. Removing this signal dramatically improves some of the likelihood scans but many show no change.

After this analysis, the main factors causing these fluctuations in the likelihood surface seem to be a combination of bin-wise fluctuations in the waveform and the presence of after-pulses which are not taken into account by millipede. The after-pulses and other late light seem to be the dominant cause across a range of energies, though generally high energy events, while the fluctuations are the dominant cause for the low energy events.
Declaration of Originality

I, Alexander Wallace, certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Alexander Wallace
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## Contents

1 Neutrinos ................................................. 1
   1.1 Background and Discovery .......................... 1
   1.2 Neutrinos in the Standard Model .................. 2
   1.3 Neutrino Interactions .............................. 3
       1.3.1 Lepton Family Conservation .................. 4
   1.4 Summary ........................................... 5

2 High Energy Astrophysics ................................... 7
   2.1 Cosmic Rays ....................................... 7
       2.1.1 Cosmic Ray Acceleration ...................... 7
       2.1.2 Cosmic Ray Propagation Through Space .......... 8
   2.2 Production of Secondary Particles .................. 9
       2.2.1 Neutral Messenger Particles .................. 10
   2.3 Particle Detection On Earth ........................ 13
       2.3.1 Cherenkov Radiation .......................... 13
       2.3.2 Detection Methods ............................ 14
   2.4 Summary ........................................... 16

3 The IceCube Neutrino Observatory ......................... 17
   3.1 Detector Layout ................................... 17
   3.2 Light Signal in DOMs .............................. 18
       3.2.1 Detection of Cherenkov Light .................. 18
       3.2.2 Signals of Different Flavours ................. 21
   3.3 Optical Properties of the Ice ...................... 23
   3.4 Discovery of Astrophysical Neutrinos ............... 24

4 Event Reconstruction ....................................... 27
   4.1 IceCube Coordinate System ......................... 27
       4.1.1 Definition of Vertex ......................... 28
   4.2 Line-Fit ........................................... 29
   4.3 SPE and MPE ....................................... 30
   4.4 Millipede ......................................... 32
       4.4.1 Millipede Time Binning ....................... 34
4.4.2 Millipede Likelihood .............................................. 36
4.4.3 Issues with Millipede ............................................. 38

5 Initial Testing of Millipede ........................................ 39
  5.1 Comparison of Reconstructions ................................. 39
  5.2 Grid Scans .......................................................... 41
    5.2.1 Healpix Grid ................................................. 42
    5.2.2 Example Scans of HESE Neutrinos ...................... 43
    5.2.3 Testing with HESE Track Event ......................... 44
    5.2.4 Scans of Four Simulated Events ....................... 46
  5.3 Test of Statistical Errors ..................................... 48
    5.3.1 1-dimensional Scans and Curve Fitting ............... 48
    5.3.2 Results from multiple events ............................ 54
    5.3.3 Test of Overall Smoothness ............................... 56
    5.3.4 Comparison to smooth function ........................... 58
  5.4 Summary .......................................................... 59

6 Investigation of Likelihood Fluctuations ...................... 61
  6.1 Close Grid Scan ................................................ 62
    6.1.1 Vertex Shifts ............................................... 62
  6.2 Vertex Scans ...................................................... 68
    6.2.1 Three-dimensional Vertex Scan ......................... 68
    6.2.2 Plane Scan .................................................. 69
  6.3 Fixed Vertex ....................................................... 70
    6.3.1 Fixed Energy Losses ...................................... 70
    6.3.2 Only Fitting Energy Losses ............................... 72
  6.4 Summary .......................................................... 73

7 Possible Causes of Vertex Fluctuations ....................... 75
  7.1 Using Millipede Predictions as Input ....................... 75
    7.1.1 Adding Poisson Fluctuations ............................. 76
  7.2 Attempts to Remove After-pulses ............................. 77
    7.2.1 Reconstructions with Time Cut ........................... 80
    7.2.2 Tightness of the Minimum ............................... 85
    7.2.3 Overall Accuracy of Scans ............................... 89
    7.2.4 Comparison of Fluctuations .............................. 91
  7.3 Adding After-pulses and Fluctuations ...................... 93
    7.3.1 Adding Poisson Fluctuations ............................ 93
    7.3.2 Adding After-pulses ..................................... 95
  7.4 Summary .......................................................... 98

8 Conclusions .......................................................... 101
  8.1 Future Work ....................................................... 102
## Appendix A Derivations

A.1 Cosmic Ray Acceleration and Spectrum ........................................... 103
   A.1.1 Second Order Fermi Acceleration ........................................... 103
   A.1.2 First Order Fermi Acceleration ........................................... 105
   A.1.3 Cosmic Ray Spectrum .......................................................... 106
A.2 Geometric Time for SPE and MPE .................................................. 108
A.3 Space Angle Formula ................................................................. 109
A.4 Chi Squared Critical Value .......................................................... 110
A.5 Perpendicular Plane Coordinates .................................................. 111

## Appendix B Technical Details of Simulation and Reconstruction

B.1 The IceTray Software ................................................................. 113
B.2 The MC Tree .............................................................................. 113
B.3 Using the Millipede Likelihood Function as the Simulation .......... 115
B.4 Added Poisson Fluctuations .......................................................... 117
B.5 Added After-pulses ................................................................. 118

## Appendix C Reconstruction Python Code

C.1 Millipede Free Fit ........................................................................ 119
C.2 Grid Scan .................................................................................. 120

## References

References.................................................................................. 123