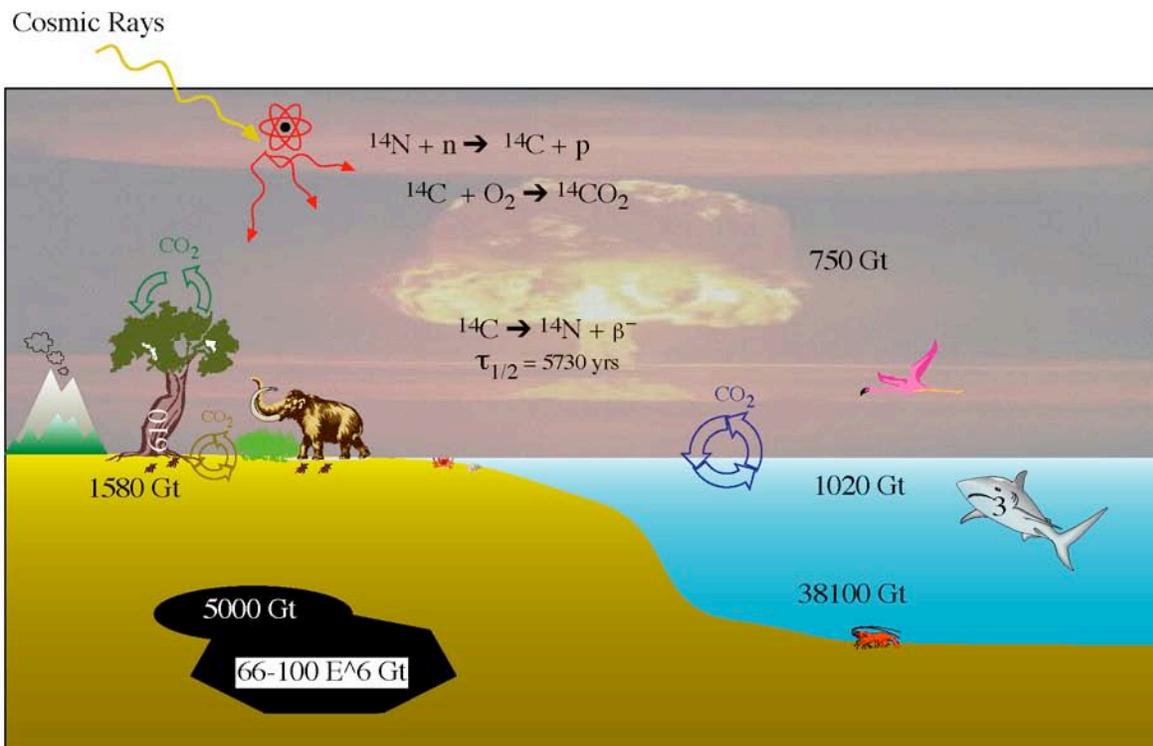


(Radio)-Carbon In the Environment



Carbon 14 is produced in the atmosphere by the irradiation of Nitrogen 14 by the sun or by the testing of nuclear weapons.

All organisms absorb Carbon 14 while they are living, when they die the Carbon 14 decays back to Nitrogen 14.

By measuring the amount of Carbon 14 we determine how long ago the organism died. ^{14}C is radioactive and has a half-life of 5,730 years. Beyond 10 half-lives (50,000 years), virtually no ^{14}C exists.