Tawhiri Documentation

Release 0.2.0

Cambridge University Spaceflight

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Tawhiri is the name given to the next version of the Cambridge University Spacefligt balloon path and landing prediction software. The name comes from a Mori god of weather, which rather aptly "drove Tangaroa and his progeny into the sea" (WP).

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Introduction

The project is separated into three parts:

- the predictor: provides an API over which requests for a prediction can be made. This API is public, and can be used by main predictor web UI, as a live predictor by mapping software, and potential future uses we haven't thought of.
- the web UI
- the dataset downloader: runs as a single standalone separate process, watches for new datasets published by the NOAA and retrieves them.

1.1 Setup & Installation

1.1.1 Predictor

...is written for Python 3 (though is compatible with Python 2) and needs Cython:

```
$ virtualenv venv
$ source venv/bin/activate
$ pip install cython
$ python setup.py build_ext --inplace
```

The last line (re-)builds the Cython extensions, and needs to be run again after modifying any .pyx files.

1.1.2 Downloader

The downloader uses gevent, so we are (disappointingly) restricted to running it under Python 2 for now.

At the time of writing, pygrib head did not work (in contrast to an earlier version), and both have a broken *setup.py*. Therefore, we need to install numpy first, and pyproj separately:

```
$ sudo aptitude install libevent-dev libgrib-api-dev
$ virtualenv -p python2 venv
$ source venv/bin/activate
$ pip install numpy
$ pip install pygrib==1.9.6 pyproj 'gevent<1.0'</pre>
```

1.1.3 Web API

The web API may be run in a development web-server using the tawhiri-webapp script. If necessary, you can use the TAWHIRI_SETTINGS environment variable to load configuration from a file:

```
$ cat > devel-settings.txt <<EOL
ELEVATION_DATASET = '/path/to/ruaumoko-dataset'
WIND_DATASET_DIR = '/path/to/tawhiri-datasets'
EOL
$ tawhiri-webapp runserver -rd</pre>
```

Wind Data

Forecasts are published (for free!) by the NOAA, in the form of several hundred GRIB files.

The axes of the dataset are time, pressure level, variable, latitude and longitude. That is, the "vertical" axis is not altitude; there is a forecast for various variables at certain fixed air pressure levels. The variables we are interested in are "wind u", "wind v" and "altitude"; the first two being the speed in meters of the wind due east and north respectively.

We store wind datasets as a large array of floats (32bit). This amounts to a 9GB file on disk, which is memory mapped into the predictor and downloader processes as needed. The operating system manages caching, which means that data for popular areas can be loaded very quickly, even after a cold start of the predictor process itself.

tawhiri.download is responsible for acquiring the wind dataset. It downloads all the relevant GRIB files (~6GB), decompresses them, and stores the wind data in a new file on disk.

tawhiri.interpolate, given a dataset, estimates "wind u" and "wind v" at some time, latitude, longitude and altitude, by searching for two pressure levels between which the altitude is contained, and interpolating along the 4 axes. More details on the implementation of this are available here

Design of the predictor

3.1 Overview

The basic idea is to do something along the lines of:

```
while not k(time, lat, lon, alt):
    lat_dot, lon_dot, alt_dot = f(time, lat, lon, alt):
    lat += lat_dot * dt
    lon += lon_dot * dt
    alt += alt_dot * dt
```

where

- f is a **model** (or a combination of, see below),
- *k* is a **termination function**.

3.1.1 Purity

Models, altitude profiles and termination functions must all be pure.

Besides being cleaner, it allows us to use more interesting integration methods without worrying about side effects evaluating the functions.

3.1.2 Coordinates

We principally deal with position represented as latitude, longitude and metres above sea level. While we do have to consider horizontal velocities in metres per second (e.g., when consulting wind data), we convert to latitude & longitude (or rather, "change in latitude per unit time") as soon as possible since they will (probably) be simpler to work with. ("ASAP" is so that we—as much as possible—are only working in one coordinate system throughout the code.)

Time is represented as an absolute UNIX timestamp.

3.2 Models

A model is a callable that looks something like this:

```
def f(time, lat, lon, alt):
    # < calculation goes here >
    return lat_dot, lon_dot, alt_dot
```

f(time, lat, lon, alt):

Return velocities predicted by this model (example function)

The latitude and longitude "velocities" (*lat_dot* & *lon_dot*) are "change in decimal degrees per unit time"; vertical velocity (*alt_dot*) is just metres per second.

Parameters

- time (float) current absolute time, unix timestamp
- lat (float) current latitude, decimal degrees
- lon (float) current longitude, decimal degrees
- alt (float) current altitude, metres above sea level

Return type 3-tuple of floats: (lat_dot, lon_dot, alt_dot)

3.2.1 ... configuration

... is specified via closures, i.e. we have a function that takes some configuration and returns the actual model function.

3.2.2 ... linear combinations thereof

We want to be able to specify several models, and then "swap bits" out, or pick from a selection when setting up a flight. E.g., we might want to choose a combination of

- · wind velocity
- · constant ascent
- something more exotic, say, parachute glide

For the majority of cases, a linear combination of the models we are interested in will suffice. Note that a function that linearly combines models is itself a model; see tawhiri.models.make_linear_model().

3.3 Termination functions

A termination condition decides if the prediction (stage) should stop. They are functions that look something like:

```
def k(time, lat, lon, alt):
    return alt >= 30000
```

Note that a function returns True to indicate that the prediction should stop.

k(time, lat, lon, alt):

Decides if the prediction should stop (an example function)

Returns True if the prediction should terminate.

Parameters

- time (float) current absolute time, unix timestamp
- lat (float) current latitude, decimal degrees

- lon (float) current longitude, decimal degrees
- alt (float) current altitude, metres above sea level

Return type bool

3.3.1 ... combinations thereof

Similarly to the ability to linearly combine models, we can "OR" termination functions together with tawhiri.models.make_any_terminator().

3.4 Chaining

We want to chain stages of a prediction together: this essentially amounts to running several predictions, with the initial conditions of the next prediction being the final position of the last, and concatenating the results (see tawhiri.solver.solve()).

tawhiri.models contains a few "pre-defined profiles", that is, functions that take some configuration and produce a chain of stages for a common scenario.

As an example, tawhiri.models.standard_profile() produces the chain containing two stages:

- stage 1
 - model: a linear combination (tawhiri.models.make_linear_model()) of constant ascent (tawhiri.models.make_constant_ascent()) and wind velocity tawhiri.models.make_wind_velocity())
 - termination condition: above-a-certain-altitude (tawhiri.models.make_burst_termination())
- stage 2
 - model: a linear combination of "drag descent" (tawhiri.models.make_drag_descent()) and wind velocity
 - termination condition: positive altitude (tawhiri.models.ground_termination())

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Specific implementation details

4.1 Interpolation

4.1.1 Introduction

Consider 2D linear interpolation: you know the values of some quantity at the four corners:

$$f(0,0) = a$$
 $f(0,1) = b$ $f(1,0) = c$ $f(1,1) = d$,

and you want an estimate for the value at (x, y).

You could first interpolate along the x axis, estimating f(x,0) to be (1-x)a + xc and f(x,1) to be (1-x)b + xd.

(As an aside, you might think of (1-x) being a 'weight': how much of a we should include in our estimate.)

Then, you could interpolate along the y axis, to get

$$f(x,y) \approx (1-y)((1-x)a + xc) + y((1-x)b + xd)$$

= $(1-x)(1-y)a + (1-x)yb + x(1-y)c + xyd$.

Note, either from the symmetry or just doing it by hand, that you'd get exactly the same thing if you interpolated along the y axis first. You might interpret the quantity (1-x)(1-y) as a weight for the top left corner, how much of it we should include in the answer.

4.1.2 Functions

The function *pick3* selects the indices left and right of a given point in time, latitude and longitude (but *not* altitude: see below), and then returns an eight element array (via a C 'out' pointer): each element represents a corner, and contains its indices and its weight (the product of the three numbers between 0 and 1 which represent how close the point we want is to this corner along each axis). Note that the 8 weights will sum to 1. In the implementation, weights are stored in a variable called *lerp*.

interp3, given the choices made by *pick3*, interpolates along the time, latitude and longitude axes, giving the value of a variable at any point on one of the pressure levels.

search finds the two pressure levels between which the desired altitude lies. It calls *interp3* to get the altitude at a certain point on each pressure level. It uses binary search.

interp4, given the choices made by *pick3* and a weight / lerp to use for the altitude interpolation, interpolates along all four axes.

4.2 Overview

tawhiri.interpolate.make_interpolator() casts the dataset to a pointer (see tawhiri.interpolate.DatasetProxy) and wraps the Cython function get_wind in a closure, which does the main work.

get_wind:

- calls pick3,
- calls search,
- uses *interp3* to get the altitude on the pressure levels above and below the desired point,
- calculates the weight / lerp value for interpolating along the altitude axis,
- calls interp4 to get the final "wind u" and "wind v" values.

4.3 Extrapolation

If the altitude is below the lowest level (quite common) or above the highest (rarer), we can switch to extrapolation by allowing the weight for altitude interpolation to go out of the range [0, 1].

API

Tawhiri provides a simple API for requesting predictions. The current API version is Version 1.

5.1 Version 1

5.1.1 API Endpoint

There is a single endpoint, http://predict.cusf.co.uk/api/v1/, to which GET requests must be made with request parameters in the query string.

5.1.2 Profiles

Tawhiri supports multiple flight profiles which contain a description of the model chain to be used when predicting a specific flight type.

Tawhiri currently supports the following profiles:

- Standard Profile standard_profile
- Float Profile float_profile

Standard Profile

A profile for the standard high altitude balloon situation of ascent at a constant rate followed by burst and subsequent descent at terminal velocity under parachute with a predetermined sea level descent rate.

The API refers to this profile as standard_profile.

Float Profile

A profile for the typical floating balloon situation of ascent at constant altitude to a float altitude which persists for some amount of time before stopping. Descent is not predicted when using this profile.

The API refers to this profile as float_profile.

5.1.3 Requests

The following parameters are accepted for all requests to the predictor API. In addition, each profile accepts various additional parameters.

Parameter	Re- quired	Default Value	Description
profile	op- tional	standard_profile	The profile to use for this prediction.
dataset	op-	The latest dataset.	The dataset to use for this prediction
	tional		formatted as a RFC3339 timestamp.
launch_lati	t re de		Launch latitude in decimal degrees. Must
	quired		be between -90.0 and 90.0.
launch_long	ji re ude		Launch longitude in decimal degrees. Must
	quired		be between 0.0 and 360.0.
launch_date	et rė me		Time and date of launch formatted as a
	quired		RFC3339 timestamp.
launch_alti	topele	Defaults to elevation at launch location	Elevation of launch location in metres
	tional	looked up using Ruaumoko.	above sea level.

Standard Profile

The standard profile accepts the following parameters in addition to the general parameters above.

Parameter	Re- quired	Default Value	Description
ascent_rate	re-		The ascent rate of the balloon in metres per second. Must be greater
	quired		than 0.0.
burst_altit	u ck e		The burst altitude of the balloon in metres above sea level. Must be
	quired		greater than the launch altitude.
descent_rat	ere-		The descent rate of the balloon in metres per second. Must be greater
	quired		than 0.0.

Float Profile

The float profile accepts the following parameters in addition to the general parameters above.

Parameter	Re-	Default	Description
	quired	Value	
ascent_rate	e re-		The ascent rate of the balloon in metres per second. Must be greater than
	quired		0.0.
float_alti	t uc łe		The float altitude of the balloon in metres above sea level. Must be
	quired		greater than the launch altitude.
stop_datet	ime-		Time and date to stop the float prediction formatted as a RFC3339
	quired		timestamp. Must be after the launch datetime.

5.1.4 Responses

Responses are returned in JSON and consist of various fragments. Successful responses contain request, prediction and metadata fragments. Error responses contain error and metadata fragments only.

The predictor API returns HTTP Status Code 200 OK for all successful predictions.

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Request Fragment

The request fragment contains a copy of the request with any optional parameters filled in. If the latest dataset is being used, its timestamp is included. The API version is also included.

Example:

```
"request": {
    "ascent_rate": 5.0,
    "burst_altitude": 30000.0,
    "dataset": "2014-08-19T12:00:00Z",
    "descent_rate": 10.0,
    "launch_altitude": 0,
    "launch_datetime": "2014-08-19T23:00:00Z",
    "launch_latitude": 50.0,
    "launch_longitude": 0.01,
    "profile": "standard_profile",
    "version": 1
}
```

Prediction Fragment

The prediction fragment consists of a list of stages according to the profile in use. Each stage has a name and a trajectory. The trajectory is a list of points. A point consists of a latitude (decimal degrees), a longitude (decimal degrees), an altitude (metres above sea level) and a datetime (RFC3339 timestamp).

Profile	Stages
standard_profile	ascent, descent
float_profile	ascent, float

Example (truncated for brevity):

```
"prediction": [
 {
   "stage": "ascent",
   "trajectory": [
        "altitude": 0.0,
        "datetime": "2014-08-19T23:00:00Z",
        "latitude": 50.0,
        "longitude": 0.01
      },
        "altitude": 29997.65625,
        "datetime": "2014-08-20T00:39:59.53125Z",
        "latitude": 50.016585320900354,
        "longitude": 1.0037172612852707
   ]
 },
   "stage": "descent",
    "trajectory": [
        "altitude": 29997.65625,
        "datetime": "2014-08-20T00:39:59.53125Z",
        "latitude": 50.016585320900354,
        "longitude": 1.0037172612852707
```

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```
},
{
    "altitude": 69.78466142247058,
    "datetime": "2014-08-20T01:02:50.625Z",
    "latitude": 50.01827279347765,
    "longitude": 1.2934223933861644
    }
}
]
}
```

Metadata Fragment

The metadata fragment contains start_datetime and complete_datetime which are RFC3339 formatted timestamps representing the time and date when the prediction was started and completed.

Example:

```
"metadata": {
    "complete_datetime": "2014-08-19T21:32:52.036925Z",
    "start_datetime": "2014-08-19T21:32:51.929028Z"
}
```

Error Fragment

The API currently outputs the following types of errors in the error fragment:

Туре	HTTP Status Code	Description
RequestException	400 Bad Request	Returned if the request is invalid.
InvalidDatasetExcept	i�04 Not Found	Returned if the requested dataset is invalid.
PredictionException	500 Internal	Returned if the predictor's solver raises an exception.
	Server Error	
InternalException	500 Internal	Returned when an internal error occurs.
	Server Error	
NotYetImplementedExc	e\$#1oMot	Returned when the functionality requested has not
	Implemented	yet been implemented.

Example:

```
"error": {
   "description": "Parameter 'launch_datetime' not provided in request.",
   "type": "RequestException"
}
```

5.1.5 Full Examples

Successful Standard Prediction

Request:

```
$ curl "http://predict.cusf.co.uk/api/v1/?launch_latitude=50.0&launch_longitude=0.01&launch_datetime=
```

Response (prediction truncated for brevity):

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```
"metadata": {
  "complete_datetime": "2014-08-19T21:32:52.036925Z",
  "start_datetime": "2014-08-19T21:32:51.929028Z"
"prediction": [
    "stage": "ascent",
    "trajectory": [
        "altitude": 0.0,
        "datetime": "2014-08-19T23:00:00Z",
        "latitude": 50.0,
        "longitude": 0.01
      },
        "altitude": 29997.65625,
        "datetime": "2014-08-20T00:39:59.53125Z",
        "latitude": 50.016585320900354,
        "longitude": 1.0037172612852707
    ]
  },
    "stage": "descent",
    "trajectory": [
        "altitude": 29997.65625,
        "datetime": "2014-08-20T00:39:59.53125Z",
        "latitude": 50.016585320900354,
        "longitude": 1.0037172612852707
      },
        "altitude": 69.78466142247058,
        "datetime": "2014-08-20T01:02:50.625Z",
        "latitude": 50.01827279347765,
        "longitude": 1.2934223933861644
   ]
 }
"request": {
  "ascent_rate": 5.0,
  "burst_altitude": 30000.0,
  "dataset": "2014-08-19T12:00:00Z",
  "descent_rate": 10.0,
  "launch_altitude": 0,
  "launch_datetime": "2014-08-19T23:00:00Z",
  "launch_latitude": 50.0,
  "launch_longitude": 0.01,
  "profile": "standard_profile",
  "version": 1
}
```

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Missing Parameters

Request:

```
$ curl "http://predict.cusf.co.uk/api/v1/?launch_latitude=50.0&launch_longitude=0.01"
```

Response:

```
"error": {
    "description": "Parameter 'launch_datetime' not provided in request.",
    "type": "RequestException"
},
    "metadata": {
        "complete_datetime": "2014-08-19T21:40:08.697297Z",
        "start_datetime": "2014-08-19T21:40:08.697059Z"
}
```

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Web Interface

Details of the web interface.

tawhiri

7.1 tawhiri package

7.1.1 Submodules

7.1.2 tawhiri.dataset module

Open a wind dataset from file by memory-mapping

Datasets downloaded from the NOAA are stored as large binary files that are memmapped into the predictor process and thereby treated like a huge array.

Dataset contains some utility methods to find/list datasets in a directory, and can open (& create) dataset files.

Note: once opened, the dataset is mmaped as <code>Dataset.array</code>, which by itself is not particularly useful. <code>tawhiri.interpolate</code> casts it (via a memory view) to a pointer in Cython.

```
{\bf class} \; {\tt tawhiri.dataset.} \\ {\bf Dataset}
```

A wind dataset

```
__init___(ds_time, directory='/srv/tawhiri-datasets', new=False)
Open the dataset file for ds_time, in directory
```

Parameters

- directory (string) directory containing the dataset
- ds_time (datetime.datetime) forecast time
- **new** (bool) should a new (blank) dataset be created (overwriting any file that happened to already be there), or should an existing dataset be opened?

See also:

```
open_latest()
```

After initalisation, the following attributes are available:

array

A mmap . mmap object; the entire dataset mapped into memory.

ds_time

The forecast time of this dataset (datetime.datetime).

... and this method:

close()

Close the dataset

This deletes *array*, thereby releasing (a) reference to it. Note that other objects may very well hold a reference to the array, keeping it open.

(The file descriptor is closed as soon as the dataset is mapped.)

The following attributes are class attributes:

shape = (65, 47, 3, 361, 720)

The dimensions of the dataset

Note len(axes[i]) == shape[i].

axes

The values of the points on each axis: a 5-(named)tuple (hour, pressure variable, latitude, longitude).

For example, axes.pressure[4] is 900—points in cells dataset.array[a][4][b][c][d] correspond to data at 900mb.

element_type = 'float32'

The data type of dataset elements

element_size = 4

The size in bytes of *element_type*

size = 9528667200

The size in bytes of the entire dataset

SUFFIX_GRIBMIRROR = '.gribmirror'

The filename suffix for "grib mirror" files

DEFAULT_DIRECTORY = '/srv/tawhiri-datasets'

The default location of wind data

These "utility" class methods are available:

classmethod filename (*ds_time*, *directory='/srv/tawhiri-datasets'*, *suffix=''*)

Returns the filename under which we expect to find a dataset

... for forecast time ds_time, in directory with an optional suffix

Parameters

- directory (string) directory in which dataset resides/will reside
- ds_time (datetime.datetime) forecast time

Return type string

classmethod listdir (directory='/srv/tawhiri-datasets', only_suffices=None)

Scan for datasets in directory

... with filenames matching those generated by filename() and (optionally) filter by only looking for certian suffices.

Parameters

- directory (string) directory to search in
- only_suffices (set) if not None, only return results with a suffix contained in this set

Return type (named) tuples (dataset time, suffix, filename, full path)

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classmethod open_latest (directory='/srv/tawhiri-datasets', persistent=False)

Find the most recent datset in *directory*, and open it

Parameters

- directory (string) directory to search
- **persistent** (bool) should the latest dataset be cached, and re-used?

Return type Dataset

7.1.3 tawhiri.download module

7.1.4 tawhiri.interpolate module

```
tawhiri.interpolate.make_interpolator(dataset)
```

Produce a function that can get wind data from *dataset* (a tawhiri.dataset.Dataset).

This function returns a closure:

closure.f(hour, alt, lat, lng)

Returns delta lat, lon and alt

See also:

implementation

See also:

wind_data

The interpolation code is not documented here. Please see the source on GitHub.

7.1.5 tawhiri.models module

Provide all the balloon models, termination conditions and functions to combine models and termination conditions.

```
tawhiri.models.float_profile(ascent_rate, float_altitude, stop_time, dataset, warningcounts)
```

Make a model chain for the typical floating balloon situation of ascent at constant altitude to a float altitude which persists for some amount of time before stopping. Descent is in general not modelled.

```
tawhiri.models.make_any_terminator(terminators)
```

Return a terminator that terminates when any of terminators would terminate.

```
tawhiri.models.make_burst_termination(burst_altitude)
```

Return a burst-termination criteria, which terminates integration when the altitude reaches burst_altitude.

```
tawhiri.models.make_constant_ascent (ascent_rate)
```

Return a constant-ascent model at ascent rate (m/s)

```
tawhiri.models.make_drag_descent(sea_level_descent_rate)
```

Return a descent-under-parachute model with sea level descent <code>sea_level_descent_rate</code> (m/s). Descent rate at altitude is determined using an altitude model courtesy of NASA: http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/K-12/airplane/atmosmet.html

For a given altitude the air density is computed, a drag coefficient is estimated from the sea level descent rate, and the resulting terminal velocity is computed by the returned model function.

```
tawhiri.models.make_elevation_data_termination(dataset=None)
```

A termination criteria which terminates integration when the altitude goes below ground level, using the elevation data in *dataset* (which should be a ruaumoko.Dataset).

```
tawhiri.models.make linear model (models)
```

Return a model that returns the sum of all the models in *models*.

```
tawhiri.models.make_time_termination(max_time)
```

A time based termination criteria, which terminates integration when the current time is greater than *max_time* (a UNIX timestamp).

```
tawhiri.models.make wind velocity (dataset, warningcounts)
```

Return a wind-velocity model, which gives lateral movement at the wind velocity for the current time, latitude, longitude and altitude. The *dataset* argument is the wind dataset in use.

```
tawhiri.models.sea_level_termination(t, lat, lng, alt)
```

A termination criteria which terminates integration when the altitude is less than (or equal to) zero.

Note that this is not a model factory.

```
tawhiri.models.standard_profile (ascent_rate, burst_altitude, descent_rate, wind_dataset, eleva-
tion_dataset, warningcounts)
```

Make a model chain for the standard high altitude balloon situation of ascent at a constant rate followed by burst and subsequent descent at terminal velocity under parachute with a predetermined sea level descent rate.

Requires the balloon *ascent_rate*, *burst_altitude* and *descent_rate*, and additionally requires the dataset to use for wind velocities.

Returns a tuple of (model, terminator) pairs.

7.1.6 tawhiri.solver module

```
tawhiri.solver.solve(t, lat, lng, alt, chain)
```

Solve from initial conditions t, lat, lng and alt, using models and termination criteria from chain, an iterable of (model, terminator) pairs which make up each stage of the flight.

7.1.7 tawhiri.api module

Provide the HTTP API for Tawhiri.

```
exception tawhiri.api.APIException
```

Bases: exceptions. Exception

Base API exception.

 $status_code = 500$

exception tawhiri.api.InternalException

Bases: tawhiri.api.APIException

Raised when an internal error occurs.

 $status_code = 500$

exception tawhiri.api.InvalidDatasetException

Bases: tawhiri.api.APIException

Raised if the dataset specified in the request is invalid.

 $status_code = 404$

exception tawhiri.api.NotYetImplementedException

Bases: tawhiri.api.APIException

Raised when the functionality has not yet been implemented.

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```
status\_code = 501
exception tawhiri.api.PredictionException
     Bases: tawhiri.api.APIException
     Raised if the solver raises an exception.
     status code = 500
exception tawhiri.api.RequestException
     Bases: tawhiri.api.APIException
     Raised if request is invalid.
     status\_code = 400
tawhiri.api.handle_exception(error)
     Return correct error message and HTTP status code for API exceptions.
tawhiri.api.main()
     Single API endpoint which accepts GET requests.
tawhiri.api.parse_request(data)
     Parse the request.
tawhiri.api.ruaumoko_ds()
tawhiri.api.run_prediction(req)
     Run the prediction.
```

7.1.8 Module contents

Tawhiri is trajectory prediction software for high altitude balloons.

See http://www.cusf.co.uk/wiki/tawhiri:start for further details.

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CHAPTER 8

License & Authors

Tawhiri is Copyright 2014 (see AUTHORS & individual files) and licensed under the GNU GPL 3.

CHAPTER 9

See also

- The CUSF wiki contains pages on Tawhiri and prediction in general.
- The source is on GitHub.

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