



Figure 2.7 Cumulative history of O₂ released by photosynthesis through geologic time. Of more than 5.1×10^{22} g of O₂ released, about 98% is contained in seawater and sedimentary rocks, beginning with the occurrence of Banded Iron Formations at least 3.5 billion years ago (bya). Although O₂ was released to the atmosphere beginning about 2.0 bya, it was consumed in terrestrial weathering processes to form Red Beds, so that the accumulation of O₂ to present levels in the atmosphere was delayed to 400 mya. Modified from Schidlowski (1980).