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1                   **Ultra-high surface area and mesoporous N-doped carbon**  
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3                   **derived from sheep bones with high electrocatalytic**  
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5                   **performance toward the oxygen reduction reaction**  
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29                   **Abstract:** A nitrogen (N)-doped mesoporous carbon material exhibiting ultra-high  
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31 surface area was successfully synthesized from sheep bones via a facile and low-cost  
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33 method. The obtained carbon material had an ultra-high specific surface area of 1,961  
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35 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> and provided rich active sites for the Oxygen Reduction Reaction (ORR),  
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37 which in turn resulted in high electrocatalytic activity. It was found that the pore size  
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39 distribution for the newly prepared carbonaceous material fell in the range of 1-4 nm.  
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41 Benefiting from its high surface area and the presence of pyridine-*N* and quaternary-*N*  
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43 species, the *as*-prepared carbon material exhibited excellent ORR activity in an  
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45 oxygen-saturated 0.1 M KOH solution, compared to commercial Pt/C (10 wt%). Due  
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47 to its high ORR catalytic activity, stability and low-cost, using sheep bone as C and N  
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1 precursors to produce N-doped carbon provides an encouraging step towards the goal  
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3 of replacing commercial Pt/C as fuel cell cathode electrocatalyst.  
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6 **Keywords:** Ultra-high surface area; N-doped carbon; sheep bone; oxygen oxidation  
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8 reaction.  
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## 11 **Introduction**

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16 Cathodic electrocatalysts towards the oxygen reduction play a critical role in  
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18 numerous promising renewable energy technologies, for instance, fuel cells and  
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20 metal-air batteries [1-3]. Usually, carbon supported platinum (Pt/C) based electrodes  
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22 are currently the state-of-art catalyst for catalyzing the four-electron Oxygen  
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24 Reduction Reaction (ORR) [4,5]. However, the high price and scarcity of platinum  
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26 hinder the successful deployment and applications of fuel cell and metal-air battery  
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28 systems. Considerable efforts have focused on developing non-platinum catalysts of  
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30 comparable performance to Pt-based catalysts from cost-effective and abundant  
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32 starting materials [6-8]. In the search for low-cost noble-metal free ORR catalysts,  
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34 various N-doped carbon materials have shown promising ORR electrocatalytic  
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36 performance in alkaline media [9-11].  
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47 Generally, nitrogen doped carbon materials can be prepared by either directly  
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49 doping, namely direct pyrolysis nitrogen containing precursors or post-doping, for  
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51 instance post-treatment of carbon materials with nitrogen containing chemicals, such  
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53 as NH<sub>3</sub> [12]. For example, Rühle *et al* [13] prepared aligned N-doped carbon nanotube  
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55 (CNT) by pyrolysis of ferrocene/C<sub>60</sub> under NH<sub>3</sub> atmosphere and found that the use of  
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1 ammonia is an effective way for obtaining high level of nitrogenation of carbon  
2 materials. Rao *et al* [14] showed that good quantities of aligned N-doped nanotube  
3 bundles could be produced by the pyrolysis of pyridine over cobalt or iron catalyst  
4 surfaces. Mokaya *et al* [15] reported that aligned N-doped carbon materials could be  
5 produced on zeolite substrate, using ferric nitrate as catalysts and acetonitrile as the  
6 carbon and nitrogen precursors over the temperature range 700-800 °C.  
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9 Mesoporous N-doped carbon materials were also developed due to their unique  
10 electronic properties, good mechanical/thermal stability, excellent electrochemical  
11 performances and mesoporous networks [16]. Mesoporous N-doped carbon materials  
12 were prepared by using di-cyanamide-containing IL 3-methyl-1-butylpyridine  
13 dicyanamide as precursors and 12 nm SiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles as template at 900 °C, and  
14 followed by the removal of SiO<sub>2</sub> template [17]. N-doped mesoporous carbon materials  
15 can also be synthesized via a nano-casting process using polyacrylonitrile as nitrogen  
16 and carbon sources and mesoporous silica SBA-12 as hard template [18]. Yi *et al* [19]  
17 reported that mesoporous N-doped carbon may be prepared using mesoporous silica  
18 as a template and sucrose as a carbon source, and followed by ammonization at high  
19 temperature. However in most cases, the used nitrogen containing precursors are  
20 expensive and the post-doping pyrolysis procedures are too complicated to be  
21 industrially scaled-up for commercial applications. Therefore, there is an urgent  
22 challenge to develop alternative mesoporous N-doped carbon materials with excellent  
23 electrochemical performance but without the use of expensive precursors and  
24 complicated production procedures.  
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1 Biomass containing large amounts of proteins and amino acids is a promising  
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3 precursor for producing N-doped carbon materials. For example, world lamb  
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5 consumption increased from 6 billion kg in 1965 to 10 billion kg in 2011  
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7 (<http://www.agmrc.org/commodities-products/livestock/lamb/international-lamb-profi>  
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9 le/). Lamb bone materials are a by-product in the lamb production, which could  
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11 potentially be used as low cost raw materials for producing N-doped carbon materials.  
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17 In this work, we developed a facile, low-cost and scalable method to prepare  
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19 mesoporous N-doped carbon exhibiting ultra-high surface area from lamb bone  
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21 starting material. We found that the *as-synthesized* N-doped carbon contains abundant  
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23 mesopores of ultra-high surface area, resulting in higher electrocatalytic activity  
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25 toward the ORR in alkaline medium, when compared to commercial Pt/C (10%)  
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27 catalyst.  
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## 32 33 **Experimental**

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36 *Synthesis:* The detailed procedure for preparing nitrogen doped carbon material from  
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38 sheep bone starting material is as follows: sheep bones were washed with detergent to  
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40 strip oil off of the surface, and rinsed with tap water. The dried bones were dried in a  
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42 vacuum oven at 80 °C. The dried sheep bones were ground thoroughly and vigorously  
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44 into a fine powder using a ball-miller. The samples were pre-carbonized under  
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46 nitrogen atmosphere at 450 °C for 2 h. Then the pre-carbonized bones were mixed  
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48 with potassium hydroxide (KOH) with a weight ratio of 1:1 and placed in a quartz  
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50 tube furnace and carbonized to 850 °C under nitrogen atmosphere for 2 h. The  
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52 obtained product was immersed in a 2 M HNO<sub>3</sub> solution for 24 h to remove any traces  
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1 of inorganic compounds, such as calcium compounds (present in the bones), and then  
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3 dried in a vacuum oven at 80 °C for 12 h.  
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6 *Characterization:* X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns of the materials were obtained  
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8 using a Shimadzu XD-3A (Japan) and a CuK $\alpha$  radiation operating at 40 kV and 30  
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10 mA. Scanning Electronic Microscope (SEM) images were generated using a  
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12 JSMF-6701F (JEOL Co., Japan) operating at 5 kV. Raman spectroscopy was carried  
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14 out using a FT-Raman spectroscopy (RFS 100, BRUKER) with a Nd:YAG laser ( $\lambda =$   
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16 1064 nm). The surface area was calculated using the nitrogen adsorption and the  
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18 Brunauer-Emmett-Teller (BET) method, and the pore size distribution was calculated  
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20 from the isotherms using the Density Functional Theory (DFT) procedure. X-ray  
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22 Photoelectron Spectra (XPS) was obtained from a VGEscalab210 spectrometer fitted  
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24 with a Mg 300 W X-ray source. Binding energies were determined by referencing to  
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26 the C 1s peak at 285.0 eV. The elemental analysis of C and N elements were  
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28 conducted using an organic elemental analyzer (Thermo Flash2000).  
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39 *Electrochemical measurements:* Electrochemical measurements were carried out  
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41 using an electrochemical workstation (potentiostat/galvanostat CHI650D, Shanghai  
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43 Chenhua Co., China). A three-electrode electrochemical cell was used for the  
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45 measurements. The counter (CE) and reference electrodes (RE) were a platinum wire  
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47 and an Ag/AgCl (saturated KCl solution) electrode respectively. A Rotating Disc  
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49 Electrode (RDE) was used as the working electrode (WE), which was prepared as  
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51 follows: 5 mg of the electrocatalyst was dispersed ultrasonically in 1 mL  
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53 Nafion®/ethanol (0.25% Nafion®) and 8  $\mu$ L of the dispersion was carefully  
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1 transferred onto the glassy carbon disc ( $\varnothing = 5$  mm) using a pipette and then dried in  
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4 air.

## 5 6 7 **Results and discussion**

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10 The morphology of carbon materials made from sheep bone starting materials was  
11 investigated by SEM analyses as shown in Figure 1. It was found that the particle size  
12 distribution of the Carbonized Sheep Bones (CSB) was in the range of 500-1,000 nm.  
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14 As shown in Figure 1a, the sheep bones which were not mixed with KOH and  
15 carbonized at 850 °C exhibited a rock-like morphology. However, after the sheep  
16 bones were mixed with KOH and then carbonized at high temperature (850 °C), it was  
17 found that the particle sizes were much smaller than those observed for CSB. It was  
18 observed that the CSB material contained many irregular honeycomb-like pores,  
19 revealing a porous structure that was formed after chemical and heat treatment. The  
20 structure of the CSB was also characterized by TEM. The TEM image in Figure 1c  
21 reveals an irregular morphology with plenty of edges and borders between the  
22 particles. Moreover, no other heterogeneous particles were observed in the  
23 synthesized material. As can be seen in Figure 1d, high-resolution TEM images reveal  
24 the existence of graphitic planes in the CSB samples.  
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48 Raman spectroscopy on CSB and Vulcan XC-72 carbon materials (Figure 2) was  
49 carried out to observe the degree of structure defect and the chemical structure of the  
50 materials. Raman spectra of CSB and Vulcan XC-72 carbon materials show two peaks  
51 at  $\sim 1,300$  and  $\sim 1,587$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , corresponding to the Raman active *D* band and *G* band,  
52 respectively [20]. The *D*-band corresponds to the atomic disorder and the  
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1 displacement caused by lattice distortion, defect, and the *G*-band is attributed to all  
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3 *sp*<sup>2</sup> bonds of the graphitic network [21]. The extent of the defects can be quantified by  
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5 the ratio of the *I*<sub>D</sub>/*I*<sub>G</sub> in graphite materials, such as the higher the *I*<sub>D</sub>/*I*<sub>G</sub> ratio is, the  
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7 lower the crystallinity. The *I*<sub>D</sub>/*I*<sub>G</sub> ratio of CSB (1.012) was found to be smaller than  
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9 that of Vulcan XC-72 carbon (1.174), suggesting that CSB had a good graphitic  
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11 crystalline structure than Vulcan XC-72 carbon. Compared with that of Vulcan XC-72  
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13 carbon, the *G* bands of the CSB shifted positively, where such shifts originate from  
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15 the doping of nitrogen atom into carbon [22].  
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22 The contents of C, N and O in the CSB were determined by elemental analysis. The  
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24 results indicates the mass contents of C, N and O are 87.7 %, 5.6 % and 6.7 %  
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26 respectively.  
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31 The XRD patterns of the CSB and the Vulcan XC-72 are shown in Figure 3. In the  
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33 XRD patterns of CSB, one peak at around  $2\theta \approx 23^\circ$  is observed in both samples,  
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35 which is attributed to the reflections of the (0 0 2) plane of the graphitic structure [23].  
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37 No impurity peaks were observed, such as traces of inorganic calcium salt, suggesting  
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39 that the inorganic impurities were removed during the various acid washing steps. The  
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41 broad and weak diffraction peaks of the (0 0 2) plane indicate that graphite with  
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43 amorphous structure was formed after the sheep bones was carbonized with KOH [24].  
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45 Compared to the XRD pattern for Vulcan XC-72, the obvious left shift of the C (0 0 2)  
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47 peaks for CSB, indicates an increase of the *d*-spacing of the C (0 0 2) plane caused by  
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49 N atoms introduction into the structure.  
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59 The porous structures of the CSB were characterized by the nitrogen  
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1 adsorption-desorption isotherms (Figure 4). The isotherms of the CSB exhibit  
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3 *Langmuir I* at low relative pressures and *type IV* sorption isotherm at relatively high  
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5 pressures according to *IUPAC*, indicating the existence of micropores and mesopores  
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7 in the structure. The high N<sub>2</sub> sorption capacity indicates that the *as-synthesized*  
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9 sample possesses a high surface area and pore volume as shown in Figure 4a. The  
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11 corresponding pore size distributions revealed that the CSB possesses hierarchical  
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13 porosities ranging from micropores to mesopores. The CSB possesses a huge number  
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15 of pores of various diameters in two main regions, namely: [0.8~2.0 nm] and [2.0~  
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17 4.0 nm]. The Brunauer Emmett Teller (BET) surface area of CSB was found to be  
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19 ~1,961 m<sup>2</sup>g<sup>-1</sup>, which is much larger than the previously reported carbon materials  
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21 made from biomass (the literature findings are summarized in Table 1). High surface  
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23 areas usually provide more active sites for catalytic reactions. The micropore surface  
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25 area was also determined and found to be ~1,166 m<sup>2</sup>g<sup>-1</sup>. By calculating the ratio of the  
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27 micropore surface area to the total surface area, a porosity of 59% was found for CSB,  
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29 confirming a micropore structure.  
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42 To investigate the chemical composition and the chemical state of the CSB material,  
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44 XPS analyses were conducted (Figure 5). From Figure 5a three typical XPS peaks for  
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46 CSB are observed, corresponding to the binding energies of C *1s*, N *1s*, and O *1s*. It is  
47  
48 widely accepted that nitrogen atoms can directly or indirectly enhance ORR on carbon  
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50 electrodes. Figure 5b shows the high resolution spectrum of nitrogen *1s* peak, which  
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52 can be de-convoluted into four peaks and can be assigned as pyridinic-*N* (398.8 eV),  
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54 pyrrolic-*N* (400.3 eV), quaternary-*N* (401.5 eV) and the chemisorbed nitrogen oxide  
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1 species (402.2 eV) [33]. In addition, the atomic contents of pyridine-*N*, pyrrolic-*N*,  
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3 quaternary-*N* and nitrogen oxide relative to the total N atoms are 27 %, 18%, 21 %  
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5 and 36 % respectively. From the results, it was found that a considerable part of N  
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7 species on CSB were in the form of pyridine-*N* and quaternary-*N*, which are  
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9 considered to be the most active species for ORR [34].  
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14 Figure 6 shows the cyclic voltammograms (CVs) of carbon materials derived from  
15 sheep bone and commercial carbon black in nitrogen saturated 0.1 M KOH solution  
16 and at a scan rate of 50 mVs<sup>-1</sup>. As shown in Figure 6a, CSB shows reversible curves  
17 with featureless wide voltammetric responses in nitrogen saturated solution, which are  
18 typical characteristics of heteroatom-doped carbon tested in N<sub>2</sub>-saturated electrolyte  
19 [35]. Compared to Vulcan XC-72, the CV curves for CSB exhibits a quasi-rectangular  
20 shape, characteristic of *pseudo*-capacitive behaviour of N-doped carbons of high  
21 surface areas, facilitating charge dissemination [36]. Figure 6b displays the ORR  
22 activity of the CBS, Pt/C (10 wt.%) and Vulcan XC-72 by linear sweep voltammetry  
23 (LSV) using a RDE immersed in 0.1 M KOH aqueous solution saturated with O<sub>2</sub>. It  
24 should be noted that LSVs indicated were obtained by using LSVs measured in O<sub>2</sub>  
25 saturated KOH solution minus the LSV gotten in N<sub>2</sub> saturated KOH solution in order  
26 to remove the capacitive contribution on LSV. As shown in Figure 6b, Vulcan XC-72  
27 shows very low ORR activity in the KOH medium. LSV obtained on Vulcan XC-72  
28 showed a reduction peak at around 0.76 V vs. RHE with no current plateau (limiting  
29 current), which is mainly due to the two-electron reduction reaction of O<sub>2</sub> to OOH<sup>-</sup>  
30 [37]. Both LSVs of the commercial Pt/C and CSB show a sharp drop and rapidly  
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1 achieved saturation, indicating that ORR on both samples was a diffusion-controlled  
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3 process via an efficient  $4e^-$  transfer. After the potential is lower than 0.5V, the currents  
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5 gradually drop with the potential, which probably caused by some side processes. The  
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7 onset potential determined at a relatively small current density ( $-0.06 \text{ mA cm}^{-2}$ )  
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9 catalyzed by the CSB (0.97 V) shifts to more positive potential compared with the  
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11 Pt/C (0.97 V) and XC-72 (0.76 V), and the current density at 0.87V ( $I_{0.87V}$ ) of the  
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13 ORR on CSB ( $0.35 \text{ mA cm}^{-2}$ ) is also larger than that of the Pt/C ( $0.35 \text{ mA cm}^{-2}$ ) and  
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15 XC-72 ( $0.021 \text{ mA cm}^{-2}$ ) in the kinetic-diffusion controlled potential range, which  
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17 indicates a higher kinetic activity for the CSB. It is worth noting that the ORR onset  
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19 potential and the current density at 0.87V ( $I_{0.87V}$ ) for CSB is more positive than those  
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21 listed in Table 1. These results indicate that CSB is an excellent N-doped carbon  
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23 catalyst for ORR in alkaline solution.  
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34 The LSV curves (currents normalized to the BET surface areas) of Pt/C and CBS  
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36 were also calculated and shown in Figure 6c. As shown in Figure 6c, the current  
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38 density of CBS is much lower than that of Pt/C, which shows that the Pt is much more  
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40 active than CBS. However, Figure 6b shows that the ORR activity for carbon and Pt  
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42 are so close, which only because the CBS has much higher specific surface area. Both  
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44 direct and reverse scans for ORR on CBS and Pt/C were also carried out in  
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46 oxygen-saturated 0.1 M KOH solution (Figure 6d). There is a clear direct and reverse  
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48 scan polarization loop on Pt/C, but this loop is not found on CBS. In the case of Pt/C,  
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50 its surface is covered with adsorbed surface oxide species which can block the  
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52 adsorption of oxygen, resulting in a lower ORR current and forming a hysteresis loop.  
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1 However, the mechanism of ORR on carbon materials is different from Pt-based  
2 catalysts. The adsorbed surface species on carbon materials is  $-\text{OH}_{\text{ads}}$ , which does not  
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4 block the adsorption of oxygen and can actually facilitate the charge transfer [38].  
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7 Therefore, no hysteresis loop will be observed on the carbon materials.  
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11 To investigate the number of electrons transferred per  $\text{O}_2$  molecule on the CSB in  
12 the ORR, the reaction kinetic parameters were studied using the rotating disc  
13 voltammetry method at rotation speeds ranging from 400 to 2,500 rpm in  $\text{O}_2$ -saturated  
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$$\frac{1}{j} = \frac{1}{j_k} + \frac{1}{B\omega^{0.5}} \quad (1)$$

where  $j$  is the measured current density,  $j_k$  is the kinetic current,  $\omega$  is the rotation speed and  $B$  is the slope of K-L plots which is obtained from Figure 7b based on the Levich equation [39]:

$$B = 0.2nF(D_{\text{O}_2})^{2/3}\nu^{-1/6}C_{\text{O}_2} \quad (2)$$

where  $n$  is the number of electrons transferred in the reduction of one  $\text{O}_2$  molecule in the ORR,  $F$  is the Faraday constant ( $F = 96,485 \text{ C mol}^{-1}$ ),  $D_{\text{O}_2}$  is the diffusion coefficient of  $\text{O}_2$  in  $0.1 \text{ mol L}^{-1} \text{ KOH}$  ( $D_{\text{O}_2} = 1.9 \times 10^{-5} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$ ),  $C_{\text{O}_2}$  is the bulk concentration of  $\text{O}_2$  in the electrolyte ( $C_{\text{O}_2} = 1.2 \times 10^{-6} \text{ mol cm}^{-3}$ ), and  $\nu$  is the kinematic viscosity of the electrolyte ( $\nu = 0.01 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$ ). Here, the constant 0.2 is used when the rotation speed is expressed in rpm. **The kinetic current densities of CBS and Pt/C measured at the potential of 0.6V were -3.74 and -3.79 respectively.** According to

1 the equation, the number of electrons transferred can be calculated from the slope of  
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3  $i^{-1}$  plotted vs.  $\omega^{-1/2}$ . The average  $n$  values obtained from the curves were found to be  
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6  $\sim 3.85$ , suggesting that the ORR on CSB mainly proceeds via a  $4e^-$  transfer mechanism  
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9 [40]. This finding indicates an efficient four-electron transfer reaction occurring on  
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11 CBS to reduce oxygen directly to  $\text{OH}^-$ , which is similar to the effective oxygen  
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13 reduction process occurring on highly active commercial Pt/C electrode.  
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17 The electrocatalytic stability is another very important parameter for cathode  
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19 electrocatalysts. The ORR stability of CSB and Pt/C was assessed by potential cycling  
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21 in the range 0.165 to 1.16 V vs. RHE. Figure 8 shows the LSVs ( $\omega = 1,600$  rpm; scan  
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23 rate =  $5 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ ) of CSB and Pt/C electrodes in 0.1 M KOH solution saturated with  $\text{O}_2$   
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25 at initial and 1,000<sup>th</sup> cycles. From the LSVs, it is possible to evaluate the stability of  
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27 the materials by determining the half-wave potential ( $E_{1/2}$ ). It can be seen from Figure  
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29 8 that the half-wave potential decreases by  $\sim 43$  mV and  $\sim 62$  mV after the 1,000<sup>th</sup>  
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31 cycles for CSB and Pt/C respectively, indicating that the CSB has a better stability in  
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33 ORR than commercial Pt/C catalyst.  
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## 42 **Conclusions**

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45 A high surface area and porous carbon material with high ORR activity was  
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47 successfully produced from sheep bone via a facile and low-cost method. BET  
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49 specific surface area of CSB was found to be  $\sim 1,961 \text{ m}^2\text{g}^{-1}$ . Compared with the Pt/C  
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51 (10 wt.%), the CSB exhibits a comparable ORR electrocatalytic activities in KOH  
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53 solution. XPS results show that most of the N species on CSB were in the form of  
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55 pyridine-N and quaternary-N, which are considered to be the active species for the  
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1 ORR. CSB is therefore a promising alternative material to commercial Pt/C for ORR  
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3 in alkaline solution due to its higher activity, much better stability, low cost and easy  
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5 synthesis.  
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## 8 9 **Acknowledgments**

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## Response Letter

Dear Editors and Reviewers:

We are truly grateful for your comments and thoughtful suggestions. As such, we have made careful modifications to the manuscript. Changes to the text regarding specific queries of the reviewers are in red colored text. Please find our responses to the comments and queries below:

Reviewer #2: The authors improved some points, but misunderstood my principle comments concerning the treatment of ORR data.

(1) Both direct and reverse scans should be shown, to see whether hysteresis exists for the catalysts under comparison.

**Response:** Thanks for your suggestion. Both direct and reverse scans for CSB and Pt/C were tested and present in Fig. 6d. There is a hysteresis loop on the Pt/C catalysts, but hysteresis loop is not found on the CBS. According to paper published on ACS Catalysis (Wan *et al.* pH Effect on Electrochemistry of Nitrogen-Doped Carbon Catalyst for Oxygen Reduction Reaction, ACS Catalysis, 2015, 5, 4325-4332), the positive-going and negative-going polarization loop was found on the Pt/C catalyst. For the Pt/C catalyst, it is acknowledged that the coverage of adsorbed surface oxide species has a pronounced effect on the ORR performance. Fully covered oxide species can retard the adsorption of oxygen and, thus, lower the ORR polarization

curve. As such, the hysteresis loop in the cyclic polarization curve can be qualitatively understood by considering the coverage of the adsorbed oxide species. However, the case is different for the carbon catalyst. On the carbon materials, the ORR proceeds in a redox-mediated mechanism, in which the adsorbed surface species ( $-\text{OH}_{\text{ads}}$ ) does not block the charge transfer but acts as the bridge to facilitate the charge transfer. As such, the hysteresis loop behavior is not observed in the carbon-based catalyst. We also spent a lot of time to prepare many other N-doped carbon materials, and did direct and reverse scans for them. All of carbon materials don't show the hysteresis loop.

(2) I assumed that some current is spent for by-side process because at potentials below 0.5 V (Fig. 6b) the current on carbon (black curve) exceeds the limiting diffusion current. Nobody knows, probably the same by-side process occurs at more positive potentials as well, and contributes to the current which the authors treat as purely ORR current.

Response: Thanks for your comment. At potentials below 0.5 V (Fig. 6b) and at more positive potentials the current on carbon (black curve) exceeds the limiting diffusion current, which probably caused by some side processes. In the revised manuscript, we modified our description to avoid contributing the current to purely ORR current.

(3) To compare with Pt and other materials, the following steps are necessary:

- to calculate the kinetic current at fixed potential,

**Response:** Thanks for your comment. The kinetic current density ( $j_k$ ) in the ORR on

CSB and Pt/C were calculated using the Koutecky-Levich (K-L) equation:

$$\frac{1}{j} = \frac{1}{j_k} + \frac{1}{B\omega^{0.5}}$$

where  $j$  is the measured current density,  $\omega$  is the rotation speed,  $B$  is the slope of K-L plots which is obtained from Figure 7b. The kinetic current densities of CBS and Pt/C measured at the potential of 0.6V were -3.74 and -3.79 respectively. Corresponding modifications have been made in the revised manuscript.

- to normalize this current to the true surface area taking into account the loading.

I suspect that now the values reported by the authors correspond to more

straightforward procedure because the ORR waves for carbon and Pt are so close only

because carbon has much higher specific surface area. Note that Pt content in the

sample is only 10%, so Pt is surely many orders more active. There is also no sense to

compare mixed currents at certain potential instead of kinetic currents, because the

former depend on hydrodynamic mode (rotation rate).

**Response:** Thanks for this comment. The current normalized to the BET surface areas

was added in Fig. 6c in the modified paper. As shown in Fig. 6c, the current density of

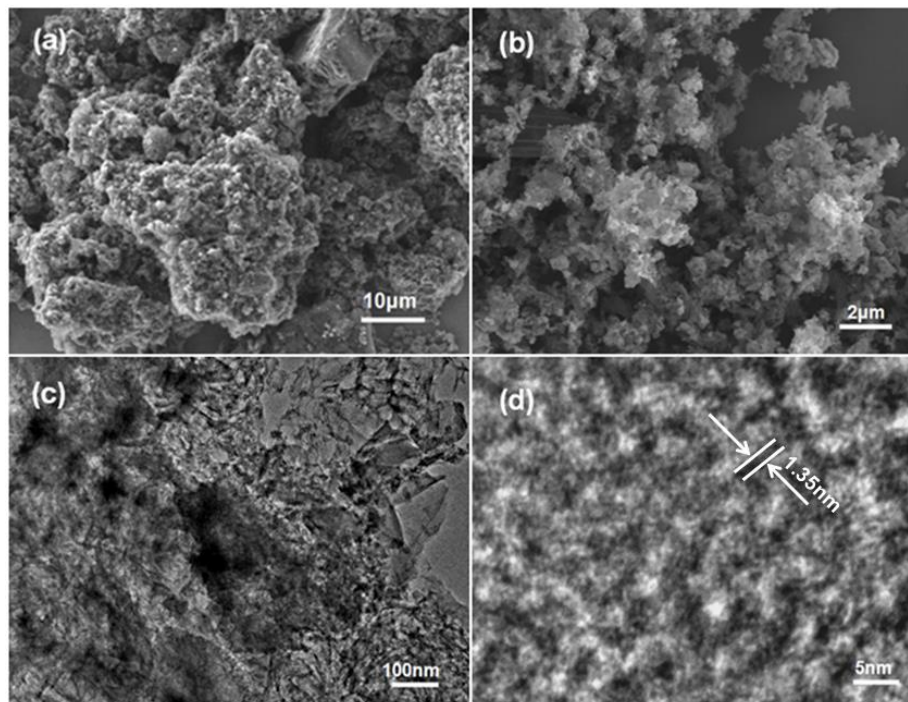
CBS is much lower than that of Pt/C, which shows that the Pt is much more active

than carbon materials. However, Fig. 6b shows that the ORR activity for carbon and

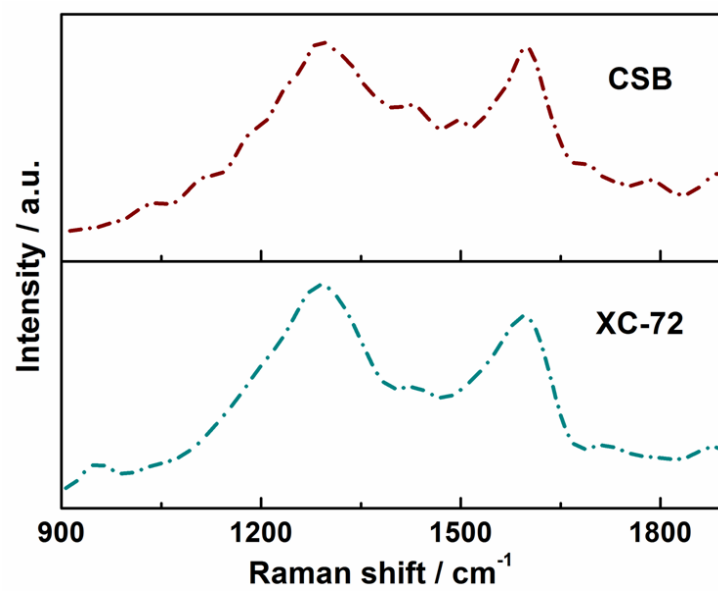
Pt are so close, which only because the CBS has much higher specific surface area.

In the next revision, the authors should avoid the excess accuracy. It is evident that subtraction of curves in N<sub>2</sub> saturated solution and recalculation to kinetic current can not provide the accuracy of three significant digits.

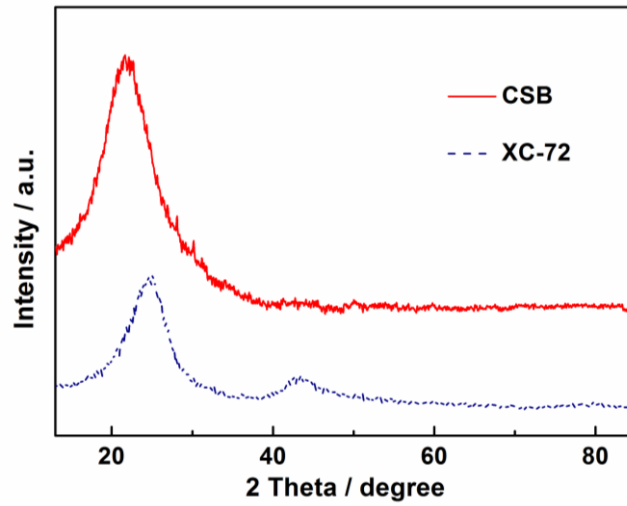
Response: Thanks for your suggestion; these figures were accurate to two decimal places in the revised paper.

**Figures:**

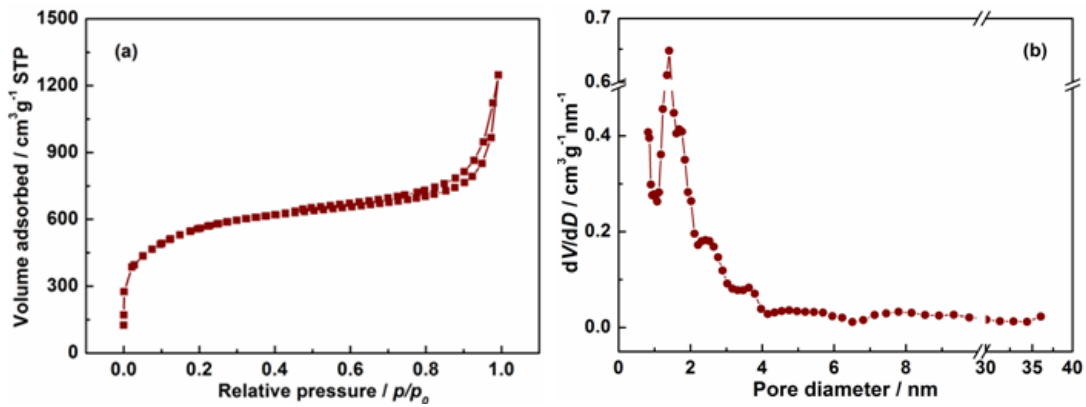
**Figure 1.** SEM (a) images of the carbon surface before chemical activation. SEM (b), TEM (c) and HR-TEM (d) images of the carbon surface after chemical activation.



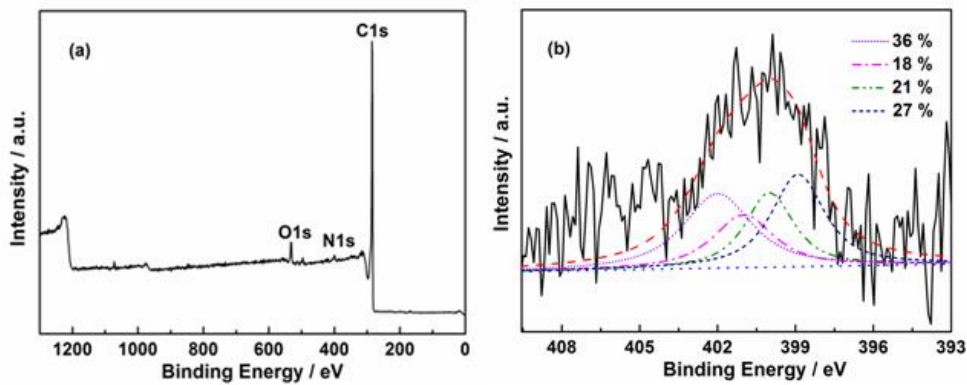
**Figure 2.** Raman spectra of CSB and XC-72 carbon



**Figure 3.** The XRD patterns of CSB and XC-72.

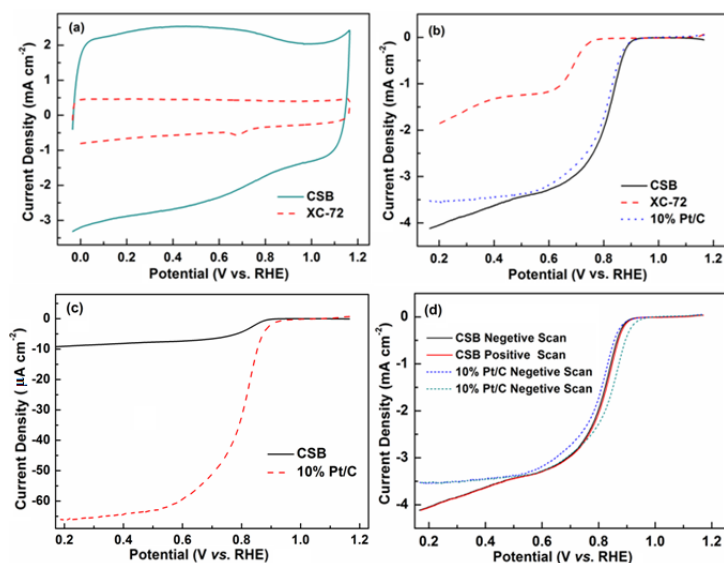


**Figure 4.** N<sub>2</sub> adsorption-desorption isotherms (a) and pore size distribution (b) of CSB and Vulcan XC-72.

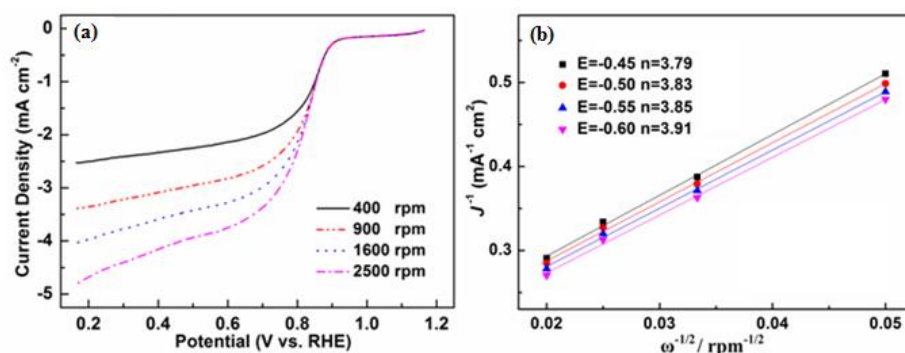




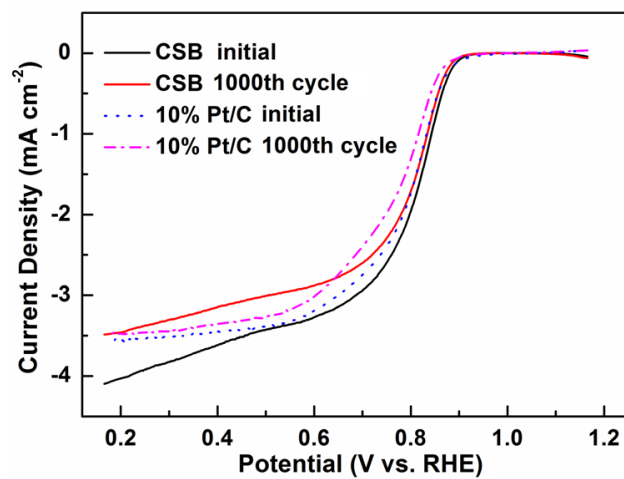
**Figure 5** (a) XPS survey spectrum of CSB; (b) High resolution XPS spectrum at N1s region of CSB.



**Figure 6.** (a) Cyclic voltammograms of CSB and XC-72 in  $N_2$ -saturated 0.1 M KOH solution; scan rate:  $50 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ ; (b) LSV curves for ORR in oxygen-saturated 0.1 M KOH solution on CSB, Pt/C and XC-72; (c) LSV curves (current normalized to BET surface area) for ORR in oxygen-saturated 0.1 M KOH solution on CSB and Pt/C; (d) Polarization curves of Pt/C and CSB in oxygen-saturated 0.1 M KOH solution; rotating rate: 1,600 rpm; sweep rate  $5 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ .



**Figure 7.** (a) Polarization curves for ORR in  $O_2$  saturated 0.1 M KOH solution on CSB electrode at various rotation speeds; (b) The Koutecky-Levich (K-L) plots for ORR derived from Figure 6a. All catalysts loadings are  $0.20 \text{ mg cm}^{-2}$ .



**Figure 8.** Linear sweep voltammograms (LSV) CSB and commercial Pt/C (10%) before and after the 1,000<sup>th</sup> cycles in O<sub>2</sub>-saturated 0.1 M KOH solution at a scan rate of 5 mV s<sup>-1</sup>.

**Table:****Table 1.** Summary of values derived from BET in Figure 4 and LSV in Fig.6(b) vs.results from anotherreferences.

Catalyst	Precursors	The catalyst loading (mg cm <sup>-2</sup> )	BET surface area (m <sup>2</sup> g <sup>-1</sup> )	Onset potential for ORR (V vs. RHE)	-I <sub>0.87v</sub> (mA cm <sup>-2</sup> )	Ref.
CSB	Sheep bone	0.20	1,961	0.977	0.353	This work
CMT-950	Catkin	0.20	257	0.775 <sup>a</sup>	0.015 <sup>b</sup>	[25]
N-OMC-800	Honey	0.14	1,273	0.835	0.167 <sup>a</sup>	[26]
CS <sub>1</sub>	Pig bone	0.02	543	0.146	0.097	[27]
CE	Egg	0.30	975	0.930	0.27 <sup>b</sup>	[28]
CFB	Fish bone	0.20	563	0.968	0.255	[29]
BP-800	Bacillus subtilis	1.0	1,578	0.785	-	[30]
CCB <sub>2</sub>	Chicken bone	0.20	769	0.7053 <sup>b</sup>	0.153 <sup>b</sup>	[31]
BCZA-900-1/2	Soybean	0.10	949	0.945	0.78 <sup>b</sup>	[32]

<sup>a</sup>Electrolyte: 1 mol L<sup>-1</sup>NaOH; <sup>b</sup>The value estimated derived from the figure.