

Observations of molecules in comets

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Abstract. Comets are among the most primitive bodies of the solar system, and their chemical composition is rich in information on the protosolar nebula and its possible connection with interstellar cloud chemistry. Comets are also a source of light atoms and probably of prebiotic organic molecules for the early Earth.

We know better and better cometary volatiles through spectroscopy, mainly at infrared and radio wavelengths. Comet to comet variations can now be discussed, and the measure of isotopic ratios leads to some puzzles. Another crucial component of cometary matter - organic refractories - is however still poorly characterized.

We will survey our present knowledge of cometary composition, report some recent results from ground based or space-borne observation and present a few key informations expected from future developments in these two fields.
