

Small scale comets, a mass loading laboratory

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The atmospheres of comets are not retained by gravity, and therefore expand into space. The Rosetta mission provided an unprecedented opportunity to study solar wind interaction with an atmosphere at varying distance to the sun and of varying density. We could see how the solar wind was affected by mass loading, and later how boundaries formed. This allows us to investigate how important the forming boundaries are for the transfer of energy and momentum from the solar wind to the atmosphere. Thus, while solar wind interaction at the comet is not important for comet atmosphere erosion, we can still learn a lot about the physical processes that may be important around other objects with a more significant gravity.