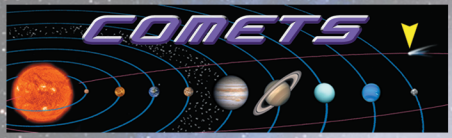
COMETS

"ICY TRAVELERS"



Comets are nomadic bodies of ice, rock and other material left over from the formation of our solar system about 4.6 billion years ago. Their orbits sometimes take them from the outermost reaches of the solar system to close passes by the Sun.

In 1992, comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 broke apart and two years later slammed into the planet Jupiter. It was the first time such an event had been witnessed by humans.

This composite image of comet Wild 2 was taken by the Stardust spacecraft during its close approach phase on Jan 2, 2004. The nucleus is about 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) in diameter.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Jet Propulsion Laboratory
California Institute of Technology
Pasadena, California

http://solarsystem.nasa.gov

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