



Comet 73P/Schwassmann-Wachmann as seen by SWAN

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The SWAN instrument on board the SOHO spacecraft is a scanning Lyman alpha imager capable of covering the entire sky. In the past SWAN has been extensively used to study the activity of comets through photodissociated neutral hydrogen that resonantly scatters solar Lyman alpha light. Around June 2006 SWAN was used to observe the brightest fragments, B and C, of the previously fragmented comet 73P/Schwassmann-Wachmann. Because of sufficient apparent separation of the bodies, the water production rates of the fragments could be determined independently between about 70 days before and up to the time of perihelion. A combined water production rate for the two fragments could be determined about 50 days post-perihelion. While roughly similar in appearance, the water production profile of fragment B is significantly more irregular than that of fragment C. Here we discuss the methods and results of the observing campaign.