

## ELECTRONIC SUPPORTING INFORMATION

for

### Electronic spectra of ions of astrochemical interest: From fast overview spectra to high resolution

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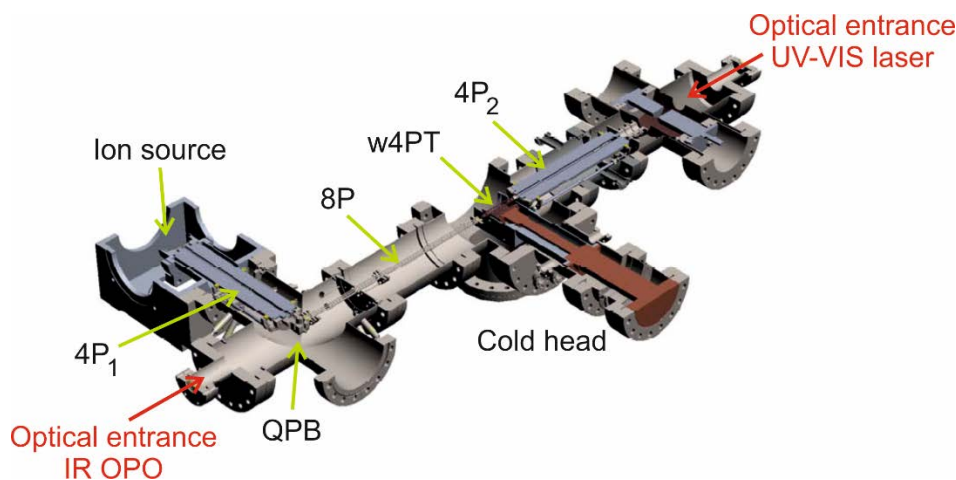
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## Experimental Setup



**Figure S1.** ISORI instrument. For details see: *Int. J. Mass Spectrom.* 2013, **354**, 204.

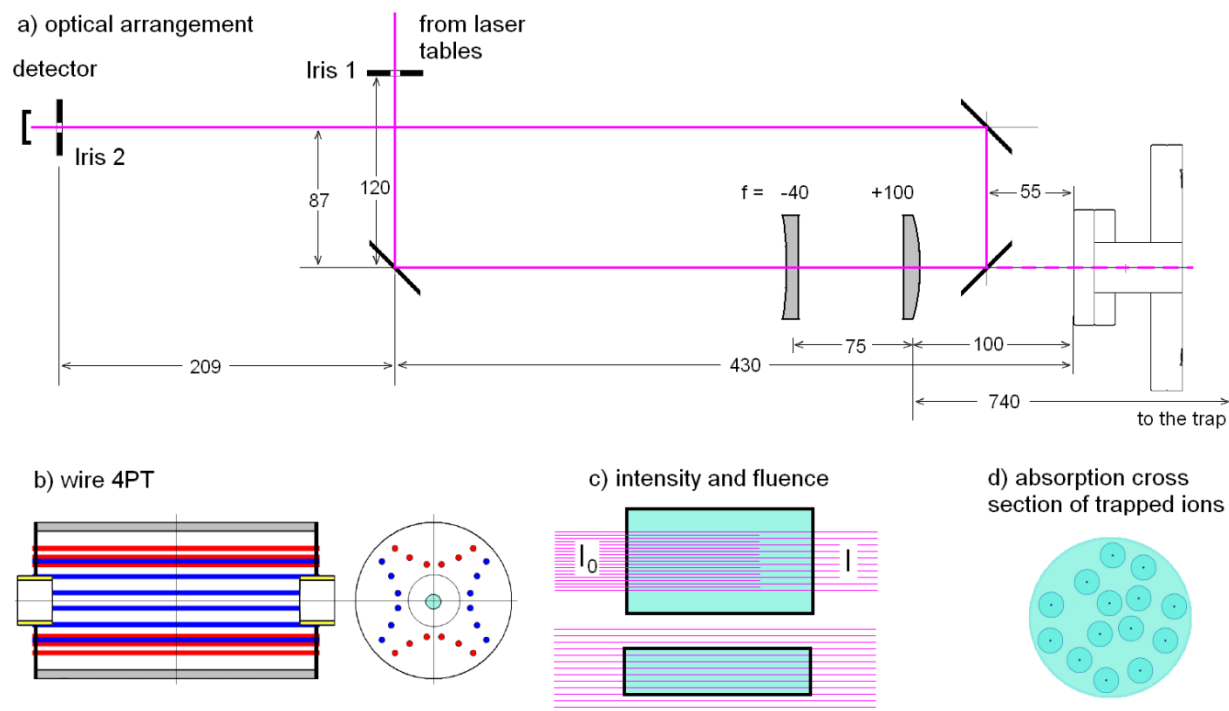
### Photodissociation of He-tagged ions in a w4PT

#### Definition of $\sigma$

The frequency dependent photoabsorption cross section,  $\sigma$ , is usually defined via attenuation of a light beam passing an absorption cell containing the absorbing molecules at a density  $n$  (see Figure S2c). If  $I_0$  is the intensity at the entrance, the intensity at the exit,  $I$ , is given by the Beer–Lambert law,

$$I = I_0 \exp(-\sigma n l). \quad (\text{S1})$$

The intensity decays exponentially as a function of the product of the absorption cross section  $\sigma$ , the density  $n$  and the cell length  $l$ . The sensitivity of direct absorption techniques is primarily limited by intensity fluctuations of the light source requiring a relative intensity change of at least 0.001. The attenuation of light passing a trapped ion cloud is below  $5 \times 10^{-10}$ , assuming a cross section of  $1 \text{ \AA}^2$  and a column density of  $n l \sim 5 \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2}$ . As an alternative, indirect absorption techniques have been developed that are based on monitoring an effect induced by the absorption of light ("action spectroscopy"). Such indirect techniques are many orders of magnitude more sensitive than direct absorption, but most of them do not provide directly absolute absorption cross sections.



**Figure S2.** Determination of absolute photo absorption cross sections. Panel a) shows the optical arrangement to transfer the laser or OPO beam into the trap and to test the beam profile at this distance by reflecting it to the detector in the upper left corner. Panel b) shows the wire quadrupole trap that allows us to squeeze the ion cloud (blue point) into the light beam (magenta circle). The upper part of panel c) illustrates the definition of the photo absorption cross section via the Beer–Lambert law (Eq. S1) while the lower part depicts our trapping experiment, where a certain number of mass selected He-complexes is confined in a cylinder with a diameter below 1 mm and is exposed for a time interval (here up to 0.9 s) to the homogeneous flow of photons. Panel d) Simple geometrical illustration for deriving the probability to hit one of the trapped ions if one exposes them to a fluence of a certain number of photons/cm<sup>2</sup>.

Our approach, based on He-tagging in a cryogenic w4PT, is an elegant method to obtain  $\sigma$  just from counting (typically every s) the number of the trapped He-tagged ions with and without laser. To optimize the geometry, the ions are confined in a cylinder with a small diameter (see figure S2b) and exposed to a homogeneous fluence of photons,  $\Phi$ . Measuring alternatively the number of helium complexes with and without radiation, one gets

$$N(\Phi) = N_0 \exp(-\sigma \Phi). \quad (\text{S2})$$

This equation holds with the same cross section  $\sigma$  as introduced in Eq. 1, because the perturbation of the molecule by the attached He is negligible in most cases. Moreover, it is safe

to assume that, in the case of UV, vis or IR light, the absorption of a single photon always results in breaking the weak vdW bond.

The fluence  $\Phi$  is the total number of photons per  $\text{cm}^2$ , the ion cloud has been exposed to. It is determined from the laser power or from the energy per OPO pulse, the irradiation time (or the number of light pulses) and from the geometry. In the present work we determine the mean fluence at the location of the trapped ions by deflecting the laser as illustrated in Fig. S2a and by measuring the effective diameter of the beam by closing iris 2 until the light detector shows 50% of the laser power (or energy). More accurate would be to permanently monitor the actual beam profile and its geometrical stability by reflecting a fixed fraction of the light beam. We also account for reflection and transmission loss by the mirrors and windows. In the present work, fluctuations of the light sources are taken into account by recording the energy per pulse (or power) behind the exit window of the instrument.

In practice, the number of complexes,  $N(\Phi)$ , remaining after exposing them to a laser fluence  $\Phi$ , is described with the function

$$N(\Phi) = N_0 \left( (1 - \beta) e^{-\frac{\Phi}{\Phi_0}} + \beta \right), \quad (\text{S3})$$

where the parameter  $\beta$  accounts for the fraction of trapped ions with the same mass which do not absorb light at the selected wavelength. In most cases these are isomers. The characteristic fluence,  $\Phi_0$ , is determined at the central frequency of the peak,  $\nu_c$ , by varying  $\Phi$  (laser power or the irradiation time). A typical example is shown in Figure 6. Using the units  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  for  $\nu$  and  $\text{mJ}/\text{cm}^2$  for  $\Phi_0$  one gets  $\sigma$  in  $\text{cm}^2$  from

$$\sigma = \nu / (\text{conv} \Phi_0) \quad (\text{S4})$$

with the conversion factor

$$\text{conv} = 0.001/1.602 \times 10^{-19} \times 8065.73 = 5.03423 \times 10^{19} \quad (\text{S5})$$

For determining the cross section from a measured attenuation, one gets from Eqs. (S3) and (S4)

$$\sigma = -\frac{\nu}{\text{conv} \Phi} \ln \left[ \left( \frac{N(\Phi)}{N_0} - \beta \right) / (1 - \beta) \right] \quad (\text{S6})$$

As already mentioned above,  $\text{conv} \times \Phi_0 / \nu$  is the number of photons per  $\text{cm}^2$ , the ions have been exposed to. With the help of Figure S2d, a simple statistical consideration allows one to proof that  $\sigma$  is really the absorption cross section.

## *Accuracy and problems*

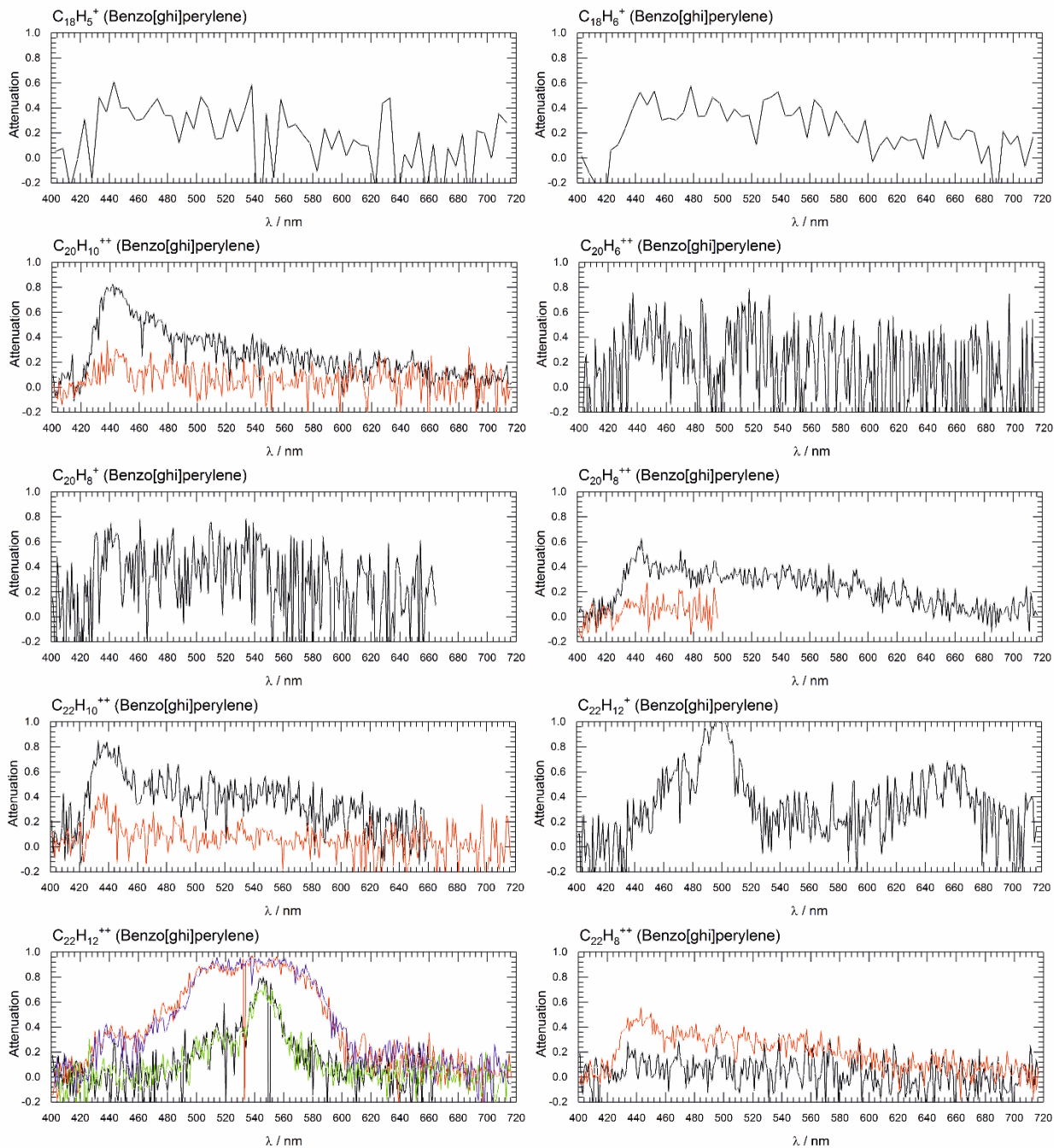
In principle, our method to record absolute cross sections is not only fast (measurements like the one shown in Figure 6 can be done in less than 10 min) but it is also very precise, at least in principle. In an ideal linear quadrupole, the effective potential of the quadrupole trap can squeeze the ions into a cylinder with a diameter of 0.25 mm ( $C_{14}H_{10}^{2+}$ , 1 MHz,  $V_0 = 100$  V). With the geometry shown in Fig. S2 the SuperK laser has been focused to a diameter of 0.35 mm resulting in a maximum spectral fluence of 10 mJ per  $cm^2$  and per nm. With this fluence it is easy to fully saturate many transitions as shown in this paper.

In practice, several experimental difficulties hamper obtaining precise values of absolute cross sections. The measurements depend on the geometry of all relevant optical parts (especially the pointing stability of the light sources) which have to be therefore very stable. Also, we had problems with the precise localization of the ion cloud in some of our experiments. For example, small potential perturbations of the trap electrodes can push (or pull) the ion cloud away from the geometrical center line of the trap and reduce the effective fluence. The results in Fig. 2b and 2f show measurements with the same settings of the laser; however, within 2 hours, the effective fluence has been reduced. Readjustment of the relevant parameters can usually compensate the perturbations. In the case of surface problems ("patch effects") usually the electrodes have to be cleaned. The trapping conditions can also be improved for a few hours by turning off the cold head and warming up the electrodes to 50 K. It is important to mention that space charge effects play a role if one operates with ion densities of more than  $10^6$  ions/ $cm^3$ .

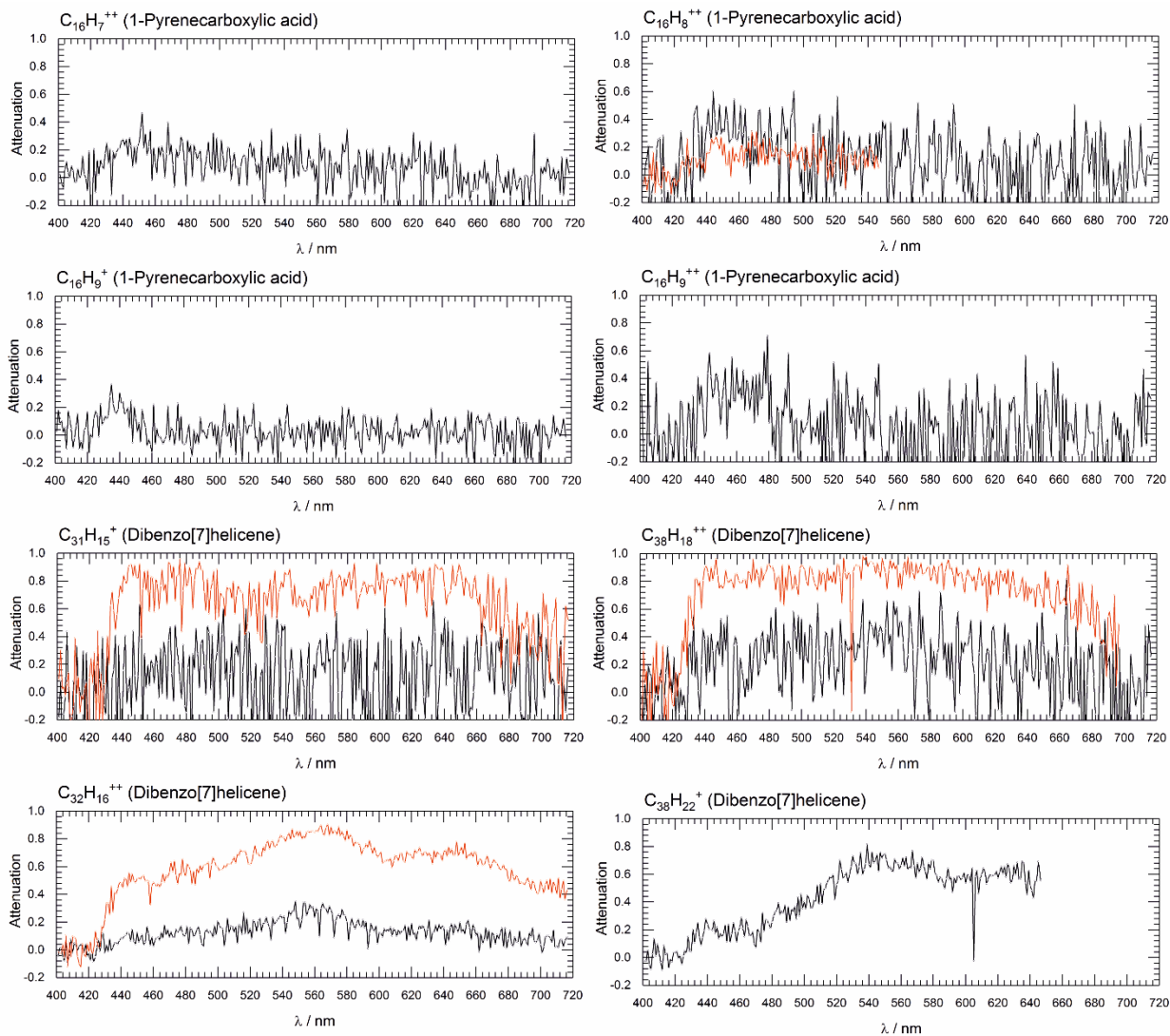
Under unfavorable conditions our measured absolute cross sections could differ by up to a factor 3. Usually, for a fixed arrangement of the laser etc. the results are reproducible with a statistical error of smaller than 5%. At the moment, this can be completely neglected in comparison with the systematic errors. In the present arrangement, the determination of the effective fluence is certainly the biggest problem, typically up to 50%. Errors from the calibrated laser power meter (< 5%) can be neglected. Most problematic is the exact position and the shape of the laser profile inside the trap and its overlap with the ions cloud. For reducing these uncertainties, we have increased the distance of the two lenses (from 75 to 77 mm), shifting the focus out of the trap and increasing the diameter of the slightly divergent light beam to 1.1 mm. This results in more stable conditions; however, it reduces the fluence by a factor of 10. Finally, the relative number of ions which do not absorb ( $\beta$  in Eq. 3), can introduce an error of up to 10 %. Overall, the results presented in this paper, have an uncertainty of up to a factor 2. Improving the experiment (cleaner or other trap electrodes, better optics, e.g. a beam profiler), our method can provide absolute cross sections with an accuracy better than 10%. This is also possible with the SuperK laser. The only additional uncertainty is the actual line width of the beam prepared with the AOTF filter.

## Experimental Results

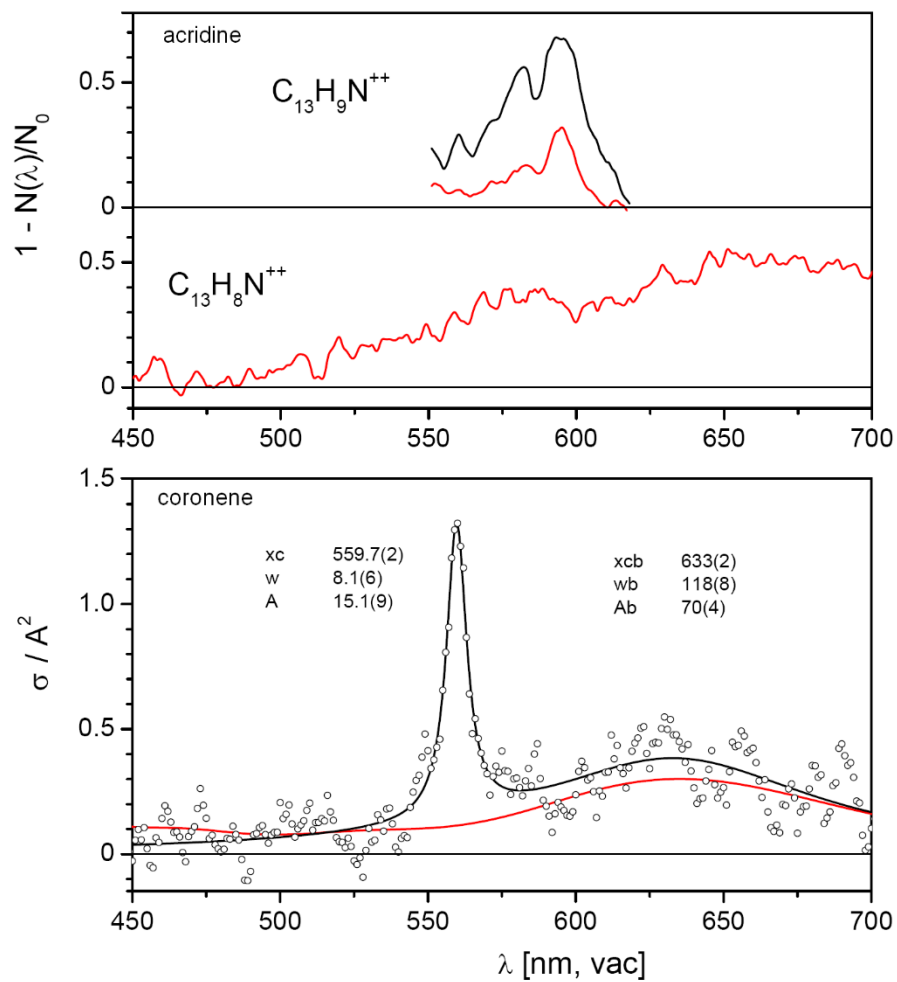
### Additional data to “Screening visPD spectra”



**Figure S3.** Overview photodissociation spectra of He-complexes of the indicated cations and dications generated by EI from benzo[ghi]perylene. Spectra recorded with different power levels of the SuperK laser are colour-coded.



**Figure S4.** Overview photodissociation spectra of He-complexes of the indicated cations and dications generated by EI from 1-pyrenecarboxylic acid and dibenzo[7]helicene. Spectra recorded with different power levels of the SuperK laser are colour-coded.



**Figure S5.** Helium tagging vis-PD spectra of  $C_{13}H_9N^{2+}$  and  $C_{13}H_8N^{2+}$  generated from acridine (upper panel) and  $C_{24}H_{12}^{2+}$  generated from coronene.

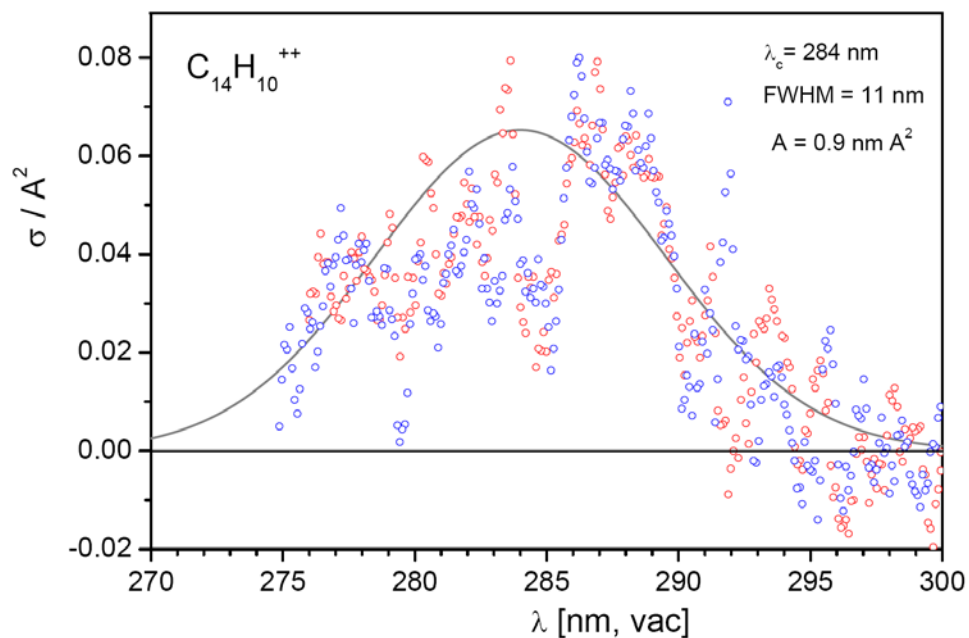


**Table S1.** List of helium tagging vis-PD spectra measured for ions generated from different aromatic hydrocarbon precursors.

1-Pyrenecarboxylic acid												
Nr	m/z	Ion	Date	File	PO / %	RF / %	Dt / ms	n / nm	Dn / nm	att / %	fig	Note
1	247	$^{13}\text{C}^{12}\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_2^+$	19.6.2018	vis11	100	20	800				2g	
2	246	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_2^+$	19.6.2018	vis06	100	20	100	445.0	21	62	2f	P=45uW
3	246	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_2^+$	19.6.2018	vis07	50	20	100					
4	246	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_2^+$	19.6.2018	vis08	100	30	100	444.5	18	76		
5	246	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_2^+$	19.6.2018	vis09	100	20	100	444.9	18	36	2f	
6	246	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_2^+$	19.6.2018	vis10	100	20	800				2f	
7	229	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_9\text{O}^+$	20.6.2018	vis01	100	20	100					
8	229	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_9\text{O}^+$	20.6.2018	vis02	100	20	100					P 100 and 50%
9	229	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_9\text{O}^+$	19.6.2018	vis12	50	20	800				2h	
10	229	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_9\text{O}^+$	19.6.2018	vis13	25	20	100	466.3	4	28		
11	229	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_9\text{O}^+$	19.6.2018	vis13	25	20	100	474.5	3	54	2h	
12	229	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_9\text{O}^+$	19.6.2018	vis14	50	20	100	466.9	5	50		
13	229	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_9\text{O}^+$	19.6.2018	vis14	50	20	100	474.3	3	93		
14	229	$\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_9\text{O}^+$	19.6.2018	vis15	50	20	100				2h	
15	201	$\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_9^+$	19.6.2018	vis01	100	20	800	438.0	20	23		
16	101	$\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_9^{++}$	19.6.2018	vis05	100	20	800	462.0	40	35		
17	100	$\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_8^{++}$	19.6.2018	vis02	100	20	800					
18	100	$\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_8^{++}$	19.6.2018	vis03	100	20	800	470.0	b	20		
19	99.5	$\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_7^{++}$	19.6.2018	vis04	100	20	800	450.0	b	20		
Anthracene												
Nr	m/z	Ion	Date	File	PO / %	RF / %	Dt / ms	n / nm	Dn / nm	att / %	fig	Note
20	178	$\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{10}^+$	13.6.2018	vis01	100	20	840					
21	178	$\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{10}^+$	13.6.2018	vis02	100	20	840					
22	178	$\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{10}^+$	14.6.2018	vis17	100	20	800				2a	
23	178	$\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{10}^+$	14.6.2018	vis18	100	20	100				2a	
24	176	$\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_8^+$	14.6.2018	vis10	100	20	800				2c	580 - 640nm att 60%
25	152	$\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_8^+$	14.6.2018	vis08	100	20	100				2d	no line, att=0.8±13%
26	152	$\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_8^+$	14.6.2018	vis09	100	20	800	554.0	100	25	2d	
27	151	$\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_7^+$	14.6.2018	vis06	100	20	100					no line att=-2±6.7%
28	150	$\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_6^+$	14.6.2018	vis07	100	20	100					no line, att=-0.3±8%
29	101	$\text{C}_8\text{H}_5^+$	14.6.2018	vis14	100	20	800					no line, att=-5±31%

30	100	C <sub>8</sub> H <sub>4</sub> <sup>+</sup>	14.6.2018	-	-	-	-						no He complexes
31	99	C <sub>8</sub> H <sub>3</sub> <sup>+</sup>	14.6.2018	-	-	-	-						no He complexes
32	98	C <sub>8</sub> H <sub>2</sub> <sup>+</sup>	14.6.2018	-	-	-	-						no He complexes
33	89	C <sub>14</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	13.6.2018	vis03	100	20	840					2b	
34	89	C <sub>14</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	14.6.2018	vis01	100	20	840					3	
35	89	C <sub>14</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	14.6.2018	vis02	50	20	840					2b,3	
36	89	C <sub>14</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	14.6.2018	vis03	20	20	840					3	
37	89	C <sub>14</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	14.6.2018	vis04	14	10	840					3	$\sigma = 5.5 \times 10^{-16} \text{ cm}^2$
38	89	C <sub>14</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	14.6.2018	vis05	100	20	100					2b	
39	89	C <sub>14</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	14.6.2018	vis11	100	20	100					2b	
40	89	C <sub>14</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	14.6.2018	vis16	100	20	100						
41	76	C <sub>12</sub> H <sub>8</sub> <sup>++</sup>	14.6.2018	vis13	100	20	800	550.0	200	9			
42	63	C <sub>10</sub> H <sub>6</sub> <sup>++</sup>	14.6.2018	vis15	100	20	800					2e	no line, att=0.4±19%
<b>Benzo[ghi]perylene</b>													
<b>Nr</b>	<b>m/z</b>	<b>Ion</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>File</b>	<b>PO / %</b>	<b>RF / %</b>	<b>Dt / ms</b>	<b>n / nm</b>	<b>Dn / nm</b>	<b>att / %</b>	<b>fig</b>	<b>Note</b>	
43	276	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>12</sub> <sup>+</sup>	20.6.2018	vis03	100	20	800	465.0	33	50			
44	276	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>12</sub> <sup>+</sup>	20.6.2018	vis03	100	20	800	498.0	27	87			
45	276	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>12</sub> <sup>+</sup>	20.6.2018	vis03	100	20	800	550.0	97	23			
46	276	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>12</sub> <sup>+</sup>	20.6.2018	vis03	100	20	800	653.0	68	50			
47	248	C <sub>20</sub> H <sub>8</sub> <sup>+</sup>	21.6.2018	vis12	100	20	800	440.3	18	64			
48	222	C <sub>18</sub> H <sub>6</sub> <sup>+</sup>	21.6.2018	vis10	100	20	800						440 - 580nm att 40%
49	221	C <sub>18</sub> H <sub>5</sub> <sup>+</sup>	21.6.2018	vis11	100	20	800						430 - 570 nm att 35%
50	138	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>12</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis01	100	20	800						
51	138	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>12</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis02	100	20	100	508.0	29	26			
52	138	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>12</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis02	100	20	100	548.0	35	62			
53	138	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>12</sub> <sup>++</sup>	20.6.2018	vis04	100	20	800						
54	138	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>12</sub> <sup>++</sup>	20.6.2018	vis05	100	20	100						
55	137	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis03	100	20	100	436.6	20	31			
56	137	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	20.6.2018	vis06	100	20	800						
57	136	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>8</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis04	100	20	800						
58	136	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>8</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis05	100	20	100						att < 20%
59	125	C <sub>20</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis06	100	20	800	442.0	24	80			
60	125	C <sub>20</sub> H <sub>10</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis06	100	20	100	442.8	21	24			
61	124	C <sub>20</sub> H <sub>8</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis07	100	20	800	442.3	24	50			
62	124	C <sub>20</sub> H <sub>8</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis08	100	20	100						att < 20%
63	123	C <sub>20</sub> H <sub>6</sub> <sup>++</sup>	21.6.2018	vis09	100	20	800	453.0	41	43			
<b>Dibenzo[7]helicene</b>													

Nr	m/z	Ion	Date	File	PO / %	RF / %	Dt / ms	n / nm	Dn / nm	att / %	fig	Note
64	479	C <sub>38</sub> H <sub>22</sub> <sup>+</sup>	22.6.2018	vis01	100	20	800	450.0		20		
65	479	C <sub>38</sub> H <sub>22</sub> <sup>+</sup>	22.6.2018	vis01	100	20	800	550.0		70		
66	401	C <sub>32</sub> H <sub>16</sub> <sup>+</sup>	22.6.2018	vis03	100	20	800				2i	
67	401	C <sub>32</sub> H <sub>16</sub> <sup>+</sup>	22.6.2018	vis04	100	20	100	497.0	32	54	2i	
68	401	C <sub>32</sub> H <sub>16</sub> <sup>+</sup>	22.6.2018	vis04	100	20	100	651.0	40	27		
69	387	C <sub>31</sub> H <sub>15</sub> <sup>+</sup>	22.6.2018	vis05	100	20	800					430 - 650 nm att 75%
70	387	C <sub>31</sub> H <sub>15</sub> <sup>+</sup>	22.6.2018	vis06	100	20	100					
71	237	C <sub>38</sub> H <sub>18</sub> <sup>++</sup>	22.6.2018	vis08	100	20	800					
72	237	C <sub>38</sub> H <sub>18</sub> <sup>++</sup>	22.6.2018	vis09	100	20	100					broadband att 40%
73	200	C <sub>32</sub> H <sub>16</sub> <sup>++</sup>	22.6.2018	vis07	100	20	800					
74	200	C <sub>32</sub> H <sub>16</sub> <sup>++</sup>	22.6.2018	vis07	100	20	100	560.0	60	30		broadband att



**Figure S6.** UV absorption of the anthracene dication. The spectrum features a very broad ( $\sim 10$  nm) absorption band around 285 nm. The cross section is below  $0.1 \text{ \AA}^2$ .

**Table S2.** Comparison of the vibronic spectrum of anthracene dication with DIBs.

DIB data			$\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{10}^{2+}$		Difference/ $\text{\AA}$
DIB number	$l_c / \text{\AA}$	FWHM / $\text{\AA}$	exp/ $\text{\AA}$	fwhm exp/ $\text{\AA}$	
40	5170.49	0.47	5160.11	9.8	10.38
49	5262.48	0.54	5262.20	6.3	0.28
63	5433.50	0.45	5442.56	7.7	-9.06
87	5556.44	1.28	5556.26	11.3	0.18
98	5669.33	1.47	5674.80	2.54	-5.47

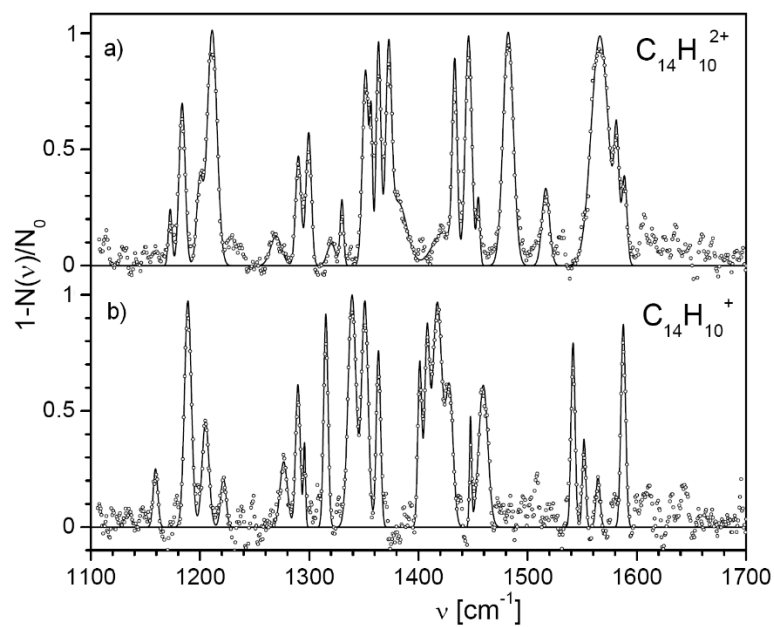
## Position of bands in helium tagging IRPD spectra of anthracene dication and monocation

**Table S3.** Peak positions in helium tagging IRPD spectrum of anthracene dication. The centers, heights and FWHM values were determined from fitting the measured IRPD spectra with Gaussian functions (see Figure S8).

Nr	Center	Height	Area	FWHM
1	1172.73	0.25	1.00	3.8
2	1183.63	0.70	4.81	6.4
3	1199.70	0.35	2.54	6.7
4	1211.11	1.02	11.12	10.3
5	1269.63	0.13	1.60	11.8
6	1290.07	0.47	2.94	5.8
7	1299.51	0.58	3.48	5.7
8	1320.25	0.09	0.88	8.8
9	1329.95	0.29	1.10	3.6
10	1351.59	0.85	5.89	6.5
11	1356.73	0.54	1.70	2.9
12	1363.44	0.95	5.00	4.9
13	1372.73	0.83	5.29	6.0
14	1381.35	0.27	5.44	18.7
15	1422.48	0.14	3.43	22.8
16	1433.25	0.82	4.44	5.1
17	1445.92	0.99	7.15	6.8
18	1454.81	0.29	1.06	3.4
19	1482.21	1.01	11.62	10.9
20	1516.55	0.33	2.86	8.0
21	1566.11	0.99	19.50	18.5
22	1581.45	0.48	2.50	4.9
23	1588.62	0.37	2.14	5.4

**Table S4.** Peak positions in helium tagging IRPD spectrum of anthracene monocation. The centers, heights and FWHM values were determined from fitting the IRPD spectrum with Lorentzian functions.

<b>Nr</b>	<b>Center</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>FWHM</b>
26	1159.25	0.25	1.33	4.9
27	1188.95	0.98	7.63	7.3
28	1205.04	0.46	3.59	7.4
29	1221.41	0.22	1.32	5.7
30	1276.63	0.28	2.36	7.8
31	1289.68	0.62	3.23	4.9
32	1295.69	0.37	0.86	2.2
33	1315.23	0.93	4.49	4.6
34	1339.23	1.00	9.07	8.5
35	1350.97	0.97	7.17	6.9
36	1363.40	0.77	3.77	4.6
37	1401.25	0.72	3.23	4.2
38	1407.86	0.77	4.14	5.0
39	1417.26	0.97	10.77	10.4
40	1428.47	0.58	4.78	7.8
41	1447.69	0.49	1.12	2.2
42	1459.38	0.61	6.34	9.7
43	1541.59	0.80	3.63	4.2
44	1551.59	0.39	1.46	3.6
45	1564.41	0.22	1.02	4.4
46	1587.54	0.88	4.56	4.9



**Figure S7.** Helium tagging infrared photodissociation spectra of  $C_{14}H_{10}^{2+}$  (upper panel) and  $C_{14}H_{10}^+$  (lower panel) generated by electron ionization from anthracene. The experimental data (points) were fitted with Gaussian peaks. The characteristics of the fits are summarized in Tables S3 and S4.

## Results of DFT calculations

**Table S5.** TD-DFT (B3LYP/6-311G+(2d,p)) results for singlet state excitations.

State (symmetry)		Excitation energy [eV]	Excitation energy [nm]	Oscillator strength <sup>a</sup>
S <sub>1</sub>	Singlet-A'	1.4464	857.22	f=0.0000
S <sub>2</sub>	Singlet-A'	2.4558	504.87	f=0.1999
S <sub>3</sub>	Singlet-A'	3.4283	361.65	f=0.0734
S <sub>4</sub>	Singlet-A'	3.6674	338.07	f=0.0000
S <sub>5</sub>	Singlet-A''	3.7153	333.71	f=0.0000
S <sub>6</sub>	Singlet-A''	3.7879	327.31	f=0.0000
S <sub>7</sub>	Singlet-A'	4.0739	304.34	f=0.0000
S <sub>8</sub>	Singlet-A''	4.1568	298.27	f=0.0000
S <sub>9</sub>	Singlet-A'	4.6307	267.74	f=1.4569
S <sub>10</sub>	Singlet-A''	4.6409	267.16	f=0.0004

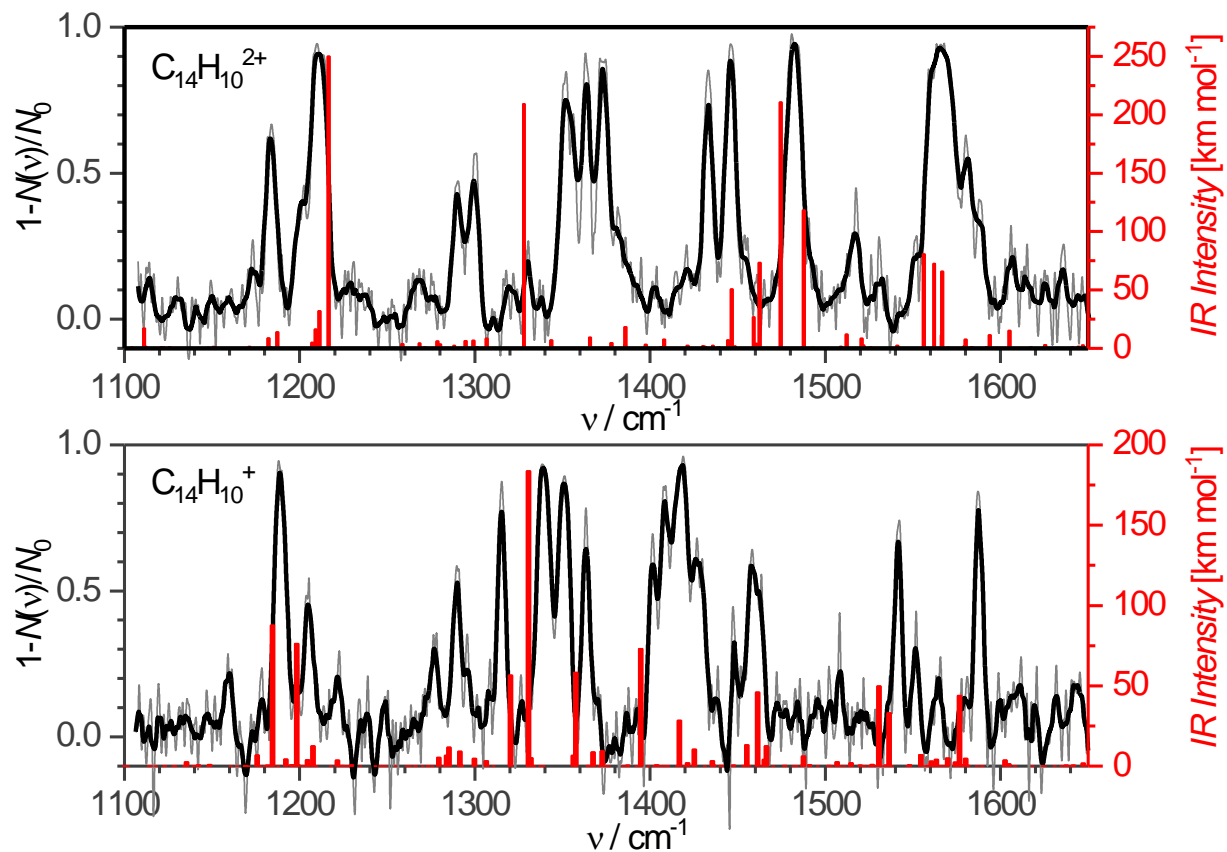
<sup>a</sup> Definition of oscillator strength:

$$f_i = \frac{8\pi^2\tilde{\nu}_i m_e c}{3he^2} D_i$$

where  $f_i$  is the (dimensionless) oscillator strength corresponding to the electronic excitation of interest, and  $D_i$  is the corresponding dipole strength in esu<sup>2</sup> cm<sup>2</sup>;  $\tilde{\nu}$  is the corresponding excitation energy in wavenumbers. The remaining two constants are the charge on the electron:  $e = 4.803204 \times 10^{-10}$  esu and the electron mass:  $m_e = 9.10938 \times 10^{-31}$  kg.



## Anharmonic theoretical IR spectra



**Figure S8.** Helium tagging infrared photodissociation spectra of  $C_{14}H_{10}^{2+}$  (upper panel) and  $C_{14}H_{10}^+$  (lower panel) generated by electron ionization from anthracene. The black spectra are 5-point smoothed original data (grey). The red stick spectra correspond to the B3LYP/6-311+G(2d,p) calculated anharmonic vibrational spectra for the corresponding optimized ions.

**Table S6.** Optimized geometries and energetics of anthracene dication in the  $S_0$ ,  $T_1$ ,  $S_2$  and  $S_3$  states and anthracene monocation. Method B3LYP/6-311G+(2d,p), the  $S_2$  state was optimized using TD DFT approach.

Ion, State, energetics, FC simulation	Optimized geometry
<p><b>C<sub>14</sub>H<sub>10</sub><sup>2+</sup>: S<sub>0</sub></b>  <b>(E<sub>rel</sub> = 0.00 eV)</b>            Charge = 2 Multiplicity = 1            Low frequencies --- -0.0003 0.0003            0.0004 2.8318 3.7989 6.4231            Low frequencies --- 79.5717 117.3439            198.9757            Zero-point correction=            0.193544 (Hartree/Particle)            Thermal correction to Energy=            0.203308            Thermal correction to Enthalpy=            0.204252            Thermal correction to Gibbs Free Energy=            0.158367            Sum of electronic and zero-point Energies=            -538.791583            Sum of electronic and thermal Energies=            -538.781820            Sum of electronic and thermal Enthalpies=            -538.780876            Sum of electronic and thermal Free            Energies= -538.826761</p>	<p>-----            Center Atomic Atomic Coordinates            (Angstroms)            Number Number Type X Y Z            -----            1 6 0 -0.013176 0.000000 0.026256            2 6 0 0.008215 0.000000 1.426808            3 6 0 1.236432 0.000000 2.122175            4 6 0 2.432709 0.000000 1.426038            5 6 0 2.434956 0.000000 0.014645            6 1 0 -0.922272 0.000000 1.984084            7 1 0 1.235547 0.000000 3.205681            8 1 0 3.375174 0.000000 1.960591            9 1 0 3.379183 0.000000 -0.519019            10 6 0 -1.227650 0.000000 -0.691497            11 6 0 -1.251652 0.000000 -2.102000            12 6 0 -0.010641 0.000000 -2.824171            13 6 0 1.203837 0.000000 -2.106419            14 6 0 1.227840 0.000000 -0.695917            15 1 0 -2.166419 0.000000 -0.145209            16 6 0 -2.458771 0.000000 -2.812562            17 1 0 2.142604 0.000000 -2.652709            18 6 0 -2.456527 0.000000 -4.223954            19 1 0 -3.402995 0.000000 -2.278895            20 1 0 -3.398990 0.000000 -4.758507            21 6 0 -1.260250 0.000000 -4.920093            22 6 0 -0.032032 0.000000 -4.224727            23 1 0 -1.259367 0.000000 -6.003598            24 1 0 0.898455 0.000000 -4.782000            -----</p>
<p><b>C<sub>14</sub>H<sub>10</sub><sup>2+</sup>: T<sub>1</sub></b>            Charge = 2 Multiplicity = 3  <b>(E<sub>rel</sub> = 0.91 eV)</b>            Low frequencies --- -5.2739 -3.8162 -            2.2506 -0.0004 -0.0002 0.0003            Low frequencies --- 81.6851 104.3193            203.7275            Zero-point correction=            0.190551 (Hartree/Particle)</p>	<p>-----            Center Atomic Atomic Coordinates            (Angstroms)            Number Number Type X Y Z            -----            1 6 0 -0.004945 0.000000 0.007087            2 6 0 0.013125 0.000000 1.453152            3 6 0 1.201788 0.000000 2.138345            4 6 0 2.421149 0.000000 1.426645            5 6 0 2.443578 0.000000 0.013408            6 1 0 -0.930486 0.000000 1.986941            7 1 0 1.212238 0.000000 3.221335            -----</p>

Thermal correction to Energy= 0.200842	8	1	0	3.360343	0.000000	1.968786
Thermal correction to Enthalpy= 0.201787	9	1	0	3.397631	0.000000	-0.501805
Thermal correction to Gibbs Free Energy= 0.153860	10	6	0	-1.214825	0.000000	-0.698949
Sum of electronic and zero-point Energies= -538.758173	11	6	0	-1.230927	0.000000	-2.099677
Sum of electronic and thermal Energies= -538.747882	12	6	0	0.019346	0.000000	-2.832869
Sum of electronic and thermal Enthalpies= -538.746938	13	6	0	1.232894	0.000000	-2.123342
Sum of electronic and thermal Free Energies= -538.794865	14	6	0	1.250218	0.000000	-0.717701
	15	1	0	-2.152160	0.000000	-0.153488
	16	6	0	-2.479252	0.000000	-2.829823
	17	1	0	2.170377	0.000000	-2.668887
	18	6	0	-2.487714	0.000000	-4.201806
	19	1	0	-3.409541	0.000000	-2.273141
	20	1	0	-3.424135	0.000000	-4.745949
	21	6	0	-1.266508	0.000000	-4.910337
	22	6	0	-0.026716	0.000000	-4.231620
	23	1	0	-1.273850	0.000000	-5.994748
	24	1	0	0.892581	0.000000	-4.806558
-----						
<b>C<sub>14</sub>H<sub>10</sub><sup>2+</sup>: S<sub>2</sub></b> Charge = 2 Multiplicity = 1  <b>(E<sub>rel</sub> = 2.35 eV)</b>	-----					
	Center Number	Atomic Number	Atomic Type	Coordinates (Angstroms) X Y Z		
	-----					
#B3LYP/6-311+G(2d,p) TD(NStates=1, Root=2) opt freq	1	6	0	-0.715442	1.232205	0.000000
Low frequencies --- -6.3768 -3.0319 - 2.1604 -0.0008 -0.0008 -0.0005	2	6	0	-1.402046	2.476935	0.000000
Low frequencies --- 82.0603 104.6265 206.9561	3	6	0	-0.695835	3.692524	0.000000
Zero-point correction= 0.190926 (Hartree/Particle)	4	6	0	0.695835	3.692524	0.000000
Thermal correction to Energy= 0.201091	5	6	0	1.402046	2.476935	0.000000
Thermal correction to Enthalpy= 0.202035	6	1	0	-2.486983	2.486679	0.000000
Thermal correction to Gibbs Free Energy= 0.155435	7	1	0	-1.243799	4.627079	0.000000
Sum of electronic and zero-point Energies= -538.705363	8	1	0	1.243799	4.627080	0.000000
Sum of electronic and thermal Energies= -538.695198	9	1	0	2.486983	2.486679	0.000000
Sum of electronic and thermal Enthalpies= -538.694253	10	6	0	-1.407390	0.000000	0.000000
Sum of electronic and thermal Free Energies= -538.740853	11	6	0	-0.715442	-1.232205	0.000000
	12	6	0	0.715442	-1.232205	0.000000
	13	6	0	1.407390	0.000000	0.000000
	14	6	0	0.715442	1.232205	0.000000
	15	1	0	-2.492391	0.000000	0.000000
	16	6	0	-1.402046	-2.476935	0.000000
	17	1	0	2.492391	0.000000	0.000000
	18	6	0	-0.695835	-3.692524	0.000000
	19	1	0	-2.486983	-2.486679	0.000000
	20	1	0	-1.243799	-4.627079	0.000000
	21	6	0	0.695835	-3.692524	0.000000
	22	6	0	1.402046	-2.476935	0.000000
	23	1	0	1.243799	-4.627079	0.000000
	24	1	0	2.486983	-2.486679	0.000000
	-----					

<p>Vibronic calculations:</p> <p>Energy = 0.0000 cm<sup>-1</sup>:  0&gt; -&gt;  0&gt; -&gt; Intensity = 0.2896E+08 (DipStr = 2.337)</p> <p>Energy = 388.0088 cm<sup>-1</sup>:  0&gt; -&gt;  8<sup>1</sup>&gt; -&gt; Intensity = 0.8144E+07 (DipStr = 0.6430)</p> <p>Energy = 776.0175 cm<sup>-1</sup>:  0&gt; -&gt;  8<sup>2</sup>&gt; -&gt; Intensity = 0.1100E+07 (DipStr = 0.8501E-01)</p> <p>Energy = 1256.7186 cm<sup>-1</sup>:  0&gt; -&gt;  42<sup>1</sup>&gt; -&gt; Intensity = 0.7387E+06 (DipStr = 0.5564E-01)</p> <p>Energy = 1404.5440 cm<sup>-1</sup>:  0&gt; -&gt;  46<sup>1</sup>&gt; -&gt; Intensity = 0.3186E+07 (DipStr = 0.2381)</p> <p>Energy = 1792.5527 cm<sup>-1</sup>:  0&gt; -&gt;  46<sup>1</sup>;8<sup>1</sup>&gt; -&gt; Intensity = 0.8564E+06 (DipStr = 0.6273E-01)</p>																																																																																																																																																			
<p><b>C<sub>14</sub>H<sub>10</sub><sup>2+</sup>: S<sub>3</sub></b> Charge = 2 Multiplicity = 1</p> <p><b>(E<sub>rel</sub> = 3.03 eV)</b></p> <p>Low frequencies --- -3.6835 -3.6507 -1.9672 -0.0006 0.0001 0.0003 Low frequencies --- 23.5264 105.7827 144.9559</p> <p>Zero-point correction= 0.185266 (Hartree/Particle) Thermal correction to Energy= 0.195755 Thermal correction to Enthalpy= 0.196700 Thermal correction to Gibbs Free Energy= 0.148452 Sum of electronic and zero-point Energies= -538.680326 Sum of electronic and thermal Energies= -538.669837 Sum of electronic and thermal Enthalpies= -538.668893</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">-----</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Center</th> <th>Atomic</th> <th>Atomic</th> <th colspan="3">Coordinates</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Number</th> <th>Number</th> <th>Type</th> <th>X</th> <th>Y</th> <th>Z</th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="7">-----</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>0.000000</td><td>0.000000</td><td>0.000000</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>0.000000</td><td>0.000000</td><td>1.414923</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>1.167229</td><td>0.000000</td><td>2.158415</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>2.409592</td><td>0.072357</td><td>1.507893</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>2.461324</td><td>0.091739</td><td>0.126584</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>-0.960899</td><td>0.069310</td><td>1.924298</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>1.126125</td><td>-0.037210</td><td>3.241265</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>3.323729</td><td>0.088019</td><td>2.090616</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>3.425923</td><td>0.037867</td><td>-0.376605</td></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>-1.143686</td><td>0.040078</td><td>-0.805274</td></tr> <tr><td>11</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>-1.156396</td><td>0.027892</td><td>-2.204470</td></tr> <tr><td>12</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>0.135831</td><td>0.130186</td><td>-2.883272</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>1.276840</td><td>0.077602</td><td>-2.074529</td></tr> <tr><td>14</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>1.294077</td><td>0.102234</td><td>-0.675321</td></tr> <tr><td>15</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>-2.100104</td><td>0.210237</td><td>-0.301395</td></tr> <tr><td>16</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>-2.320379</td><td>0.055900</td><td>-3.008483</td></tr> <tr><td>17</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>2.227539</td><td>-0.136192</td><td>-2.575951</td></tr> <tr><td>18</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>-2.268431</td><td>0.082794</td><td>-4.391159</td></tr> <tr><td>19</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>-3.284929</td><td>0.125257</td><td>-2.506075</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>-3.182973</td><td>0.066549</td><td>-4.973383</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	-----							Center	Atomic	Atomic	Coordinates			Number	Number	Type	X	Y	Z	-----							1	6	0	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000	2	6	0	0.000000	0.000000	1.414923	3	6	0	1.167229	0.000000	2.158415	4	6	0	2.409592	0.072357	1.507893	5	6	0	2.461324	0.091739	0.126584	6	1	0	-0.960899	0.069310	1.924298	7	1	0	1.126125	-0.037210	3.241265	8	1	0	3.323729	0.088019	2.090616	9	1	0	3.425923	0.037867	-0.376605	10	6	0	-1.143686	0.040078	-0.805274	11	6	0	-1.156396	0.027892	-2.204470	12	6	0	0.135831	0.130186	-2.883272	13	6	0	1.276840	0.077602	-2.074529	14	6	0	1.294077	0.102234	-0.675321	15	1	0	-2.100104	0.210237	-0.301395	16	6	0	-2.320379	0.055900	-3.008483	17	1	0	2.227539	-0.136192	-2.575951	18	6	0	-2.268431	0.082794	-4.391159	19	1	0	-3.284929	0.125257	-2.506075	20	1	0	-3.182973	0.066549	-4.973383
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17	1	0	2.227539	-0.136192	-2.575951																																																																																																																																														
18	6	0	-2.268431	0.082794	-4.391159																																																																																																																																														
19	1	0	-3.284929	0.125257	-2.506075																																																																																																																																														
20	1	0	-3.182973	0.066549	-4.973383																																																																																																																																														

Sum of electronic and thermal Free Energies= -538.717140	21 6 0 -1.026293 0.155257 -5.042054
Vibronic calculations:	22 6 0 0.139669 0.147818 -4.299330
Energy = 0.0000 cm <sup>-1</sup> :  0> ->  0>	23 1 0 -0.985799 0.192018 -6.124858
-> Intensity = 12.87 (DipStr = 0.1508E-04)	24 1 0 1.101399 0.094134 -4.807979
	-----
<b>C<sub>14</sub>H<sub>10</sub><sup>+</sup>: D<sub>0</sub></b>	-----
<b>(E<sub>rel</sub> = -11.71 eV)</b>	Center Atomic Atomic Coordinates
Charge = 1 Multiplicity = 2	Number Number Type X Y Z
Low frequencies --- -0.0007 -0.0005 -	-----
0.0004 2.6439 3.6320 5.4001	1 6 0 -0.014787 0.000000 0.023792
Low frequencies --- 85.0196 118.9532	2 6 0 0.013443 0.000000 1.433706
218.2596	3 6 0 1.221353 0.000000 2.113019
Zero-point correction=	4 6 0 2.432193 0.000000 1.408404
0.193669 (Hartree/Particle)	5 6 0 2.438361 0.000000 0.022593
Thermal correction to Energy=	6 1 0 -0.920008 0.000000 1.983919
0.203240	7 1 0 1.229921 0.000000 3.195614
Thermal correction to Enthalpy=	8 1 0 3.369197 0.000000 1.950723
0.204184	9 1 0 3.377913 0.000000 -0.517136
Thermal correction to Gibbs Free Energy=	10 6 0 -1.223201 0.000000 -0.694081
0.158068	11 6 0 -1.250306 0.000000 -2.099382
Sum of electronic and zero-point Energies=	12 6 0 -0.009028 0.000000 -2.821708
-539.222021	13 6 0 1.199385 0.000000 -2.103837
Sum of electronic and thermal Energies=	14 6 0 1.226492 0.000000 -0.698534
-539.212450	15 1 0 -2.160765 0.000000 -0.148490
Sum of electronic and thermal Enthalpies=	16 6 0 -2.462177 0.000000 -2.820509
-539.211506	17 1 0 2.136951 0.000000 -2.649424
Sum of electronic and thermal Free Energies=	18 6 0 -2.456009 0.000000 -4.206320
-539.257622	19 1 0 -3.401728 0.000000 -2.280780
	20 1 0 -3.393013 0.000000 -4.748639
	21 6 0 -1.245169 0.000000 -4.910936
	22 6 0 -0.037259 0.000000 -4.231625
	23 1 0 -1.253739 0.000000 -5.993532
	24 1 0 0.896192 0.000000 -4.781836
	-----