

Electronic Supplementary Information

Optical, structural, and biological properties of silver nanoclusters formed within the loop of C-12 hairpin sequence.

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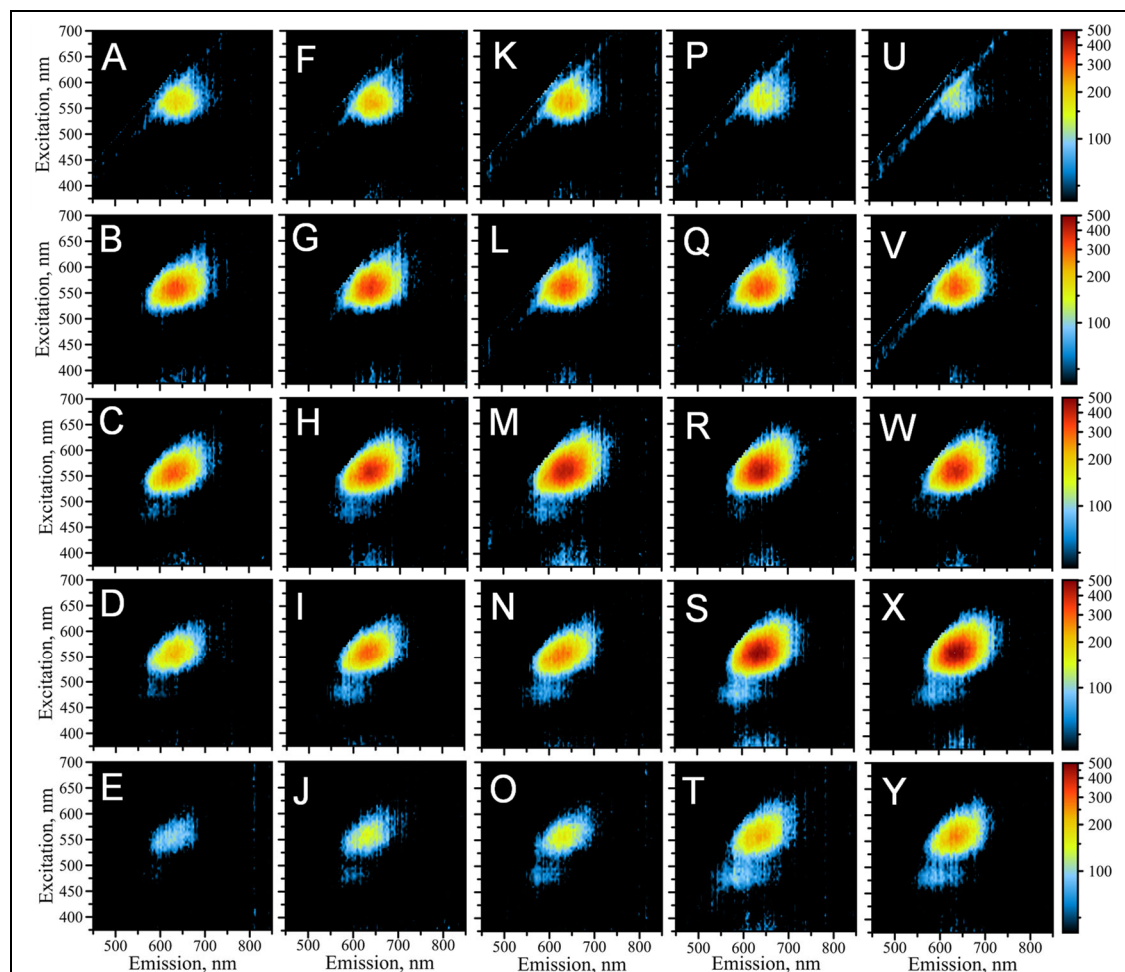


Figure S1. EEM patterns of AgNC@hpC12 obtained during optimization of AgNC synthesis conditions. Concentrations of AgNO₃ and DNA were varied for AgNO₃ from 80 μM to 160 μM and for DNA from 2 μM to 40 μM. (A) C_{AgNO₃}= 80 μM and C_{DNA}= 2 μM, (B) C_{AgNO₃}= 80 μM and C_{DNA}= 5 μM, (C) C_{AgNO₃}= 80 μM and C_{DNA}= 10 μM, (D) C_{AgNO₃}= 80 μM and C_{DNA}= 20 μM, (E) C_{AgNO₃}= 80 μM and C_{DNA}= 40 μM, (F) C_{AgNO₃}= 100 μM and C_{DNA}= 2 μM, (G) C_{AgNO₃}= 100 μM and C_{DNA}= 5 μM, (H) C_{AgNO₃}= 100 μM and C_{DNA}= 10 μM, (I) C_{AgNO₃}= 100 μM and C_{DNA}= 20 μM, (J) C_{AgNO₃}= 100 μM and C_{DNA}= 40 μM, (K) C_{AgNO₃}= 120 μM and C_{DNA}= 2 μM, (L) C_{AgNO₃}= 120 μM and C_{DNA}= 5 μM, (M) C_{AgNO₃}= 120 μM and C_{DNA}= 10 μM, (N) C_{AgNO₃}= 120 μM and C_{DNA}= 20 μM, (O) C_{AgNO₃}= 120 μM and C_{DNA}= 40 μM, (P) C_{AgNO₃}= 140 μM and C_{DNA}= 2 μM, (Q) C_{AgNO₃}= 140 μM and C_{DNA}= 5 μM, (R) C_{AgNO₃}= 140 μM and C_{DNA}= 10 μM, (S) C_{AgNO₃}= 140 μM and C_{DNA}= 20 μM, (T) C_{AgNO₃}= 140 μM and C_{DNA}= 40 μM, (U) C_{AgNO₃}= 160 μM and C_{DNA}= 2 μM, (V) C_{AgNO₃}= 160 μM and C_{DNA}= 5 μM, (W) C_{AgNO₃}= 160 μM and C_{DNA}= 10 μM, (X) C_{AgNO₃}= 160 μM and C_{DNA}= 20 μM, (Y) C_{AgNO₃}= 160 μM and C_{DNA}= 40 μM. The intensity of the “red” fluorescence reaches maximum for ratios C_{AgNO₃} / C_{DNA} between 10 and 12. We therefore used the following combination in this study: C_{AgNO₃}= 120 μM and C_{DNA}= 10 μM.

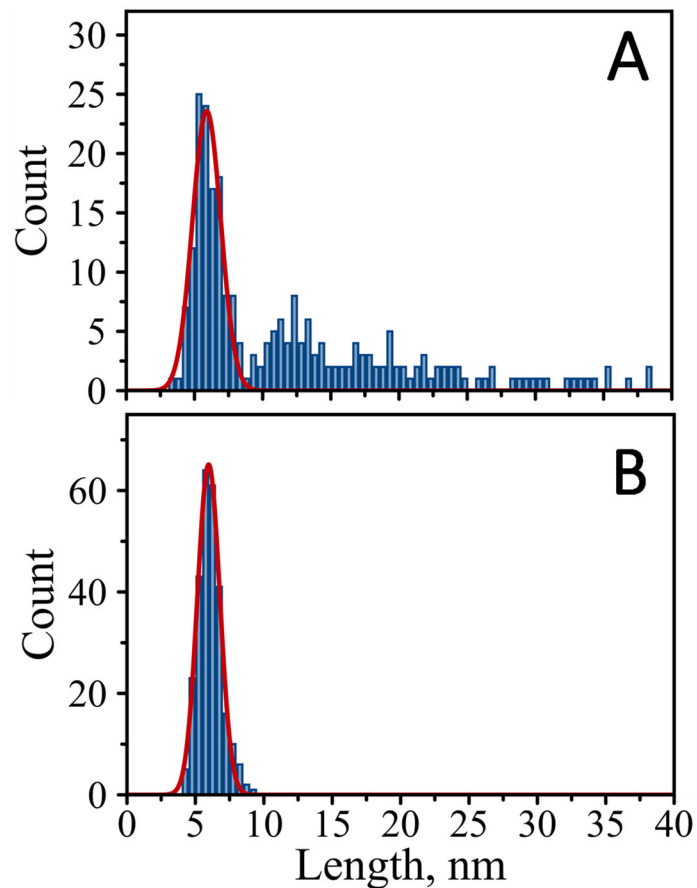
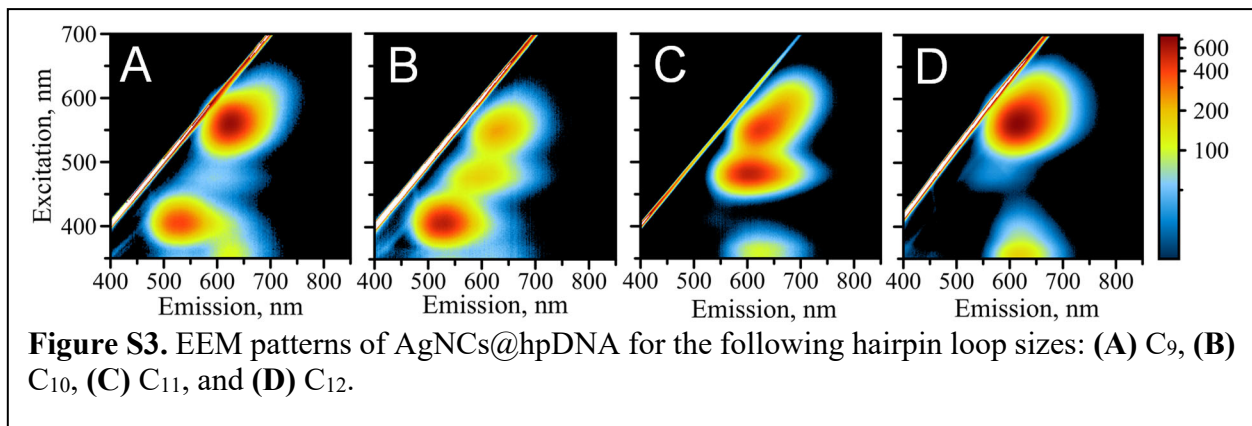
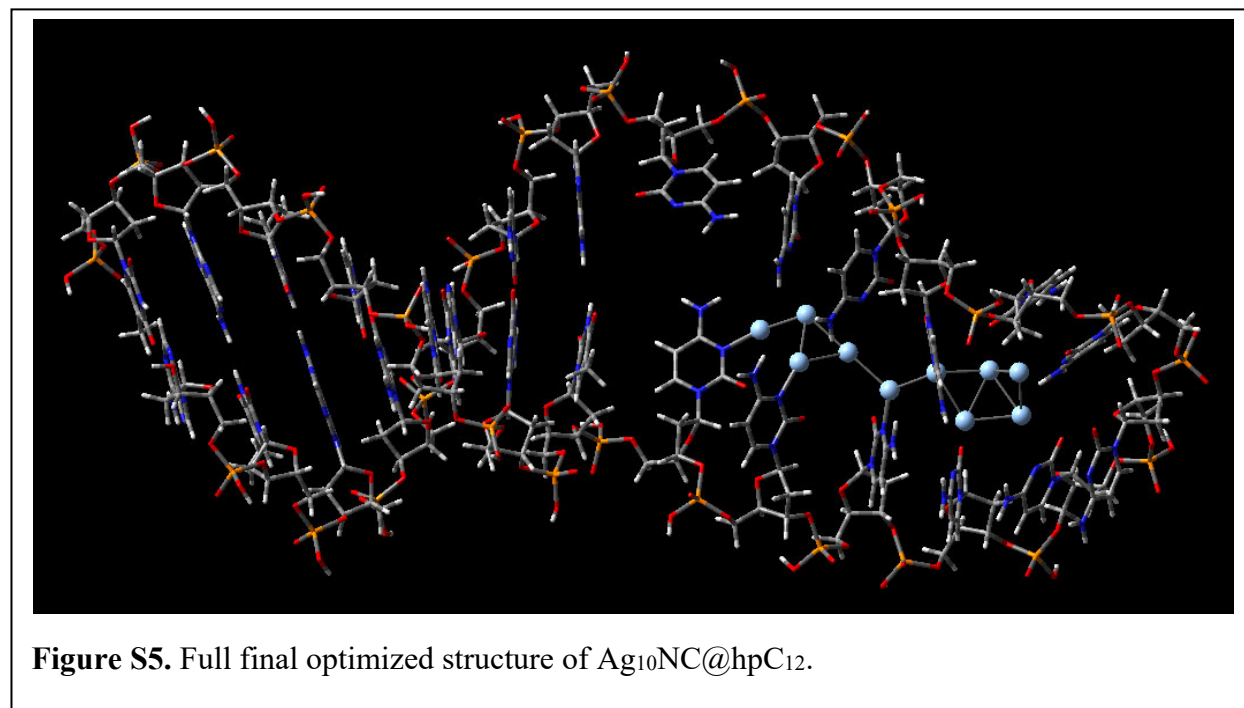
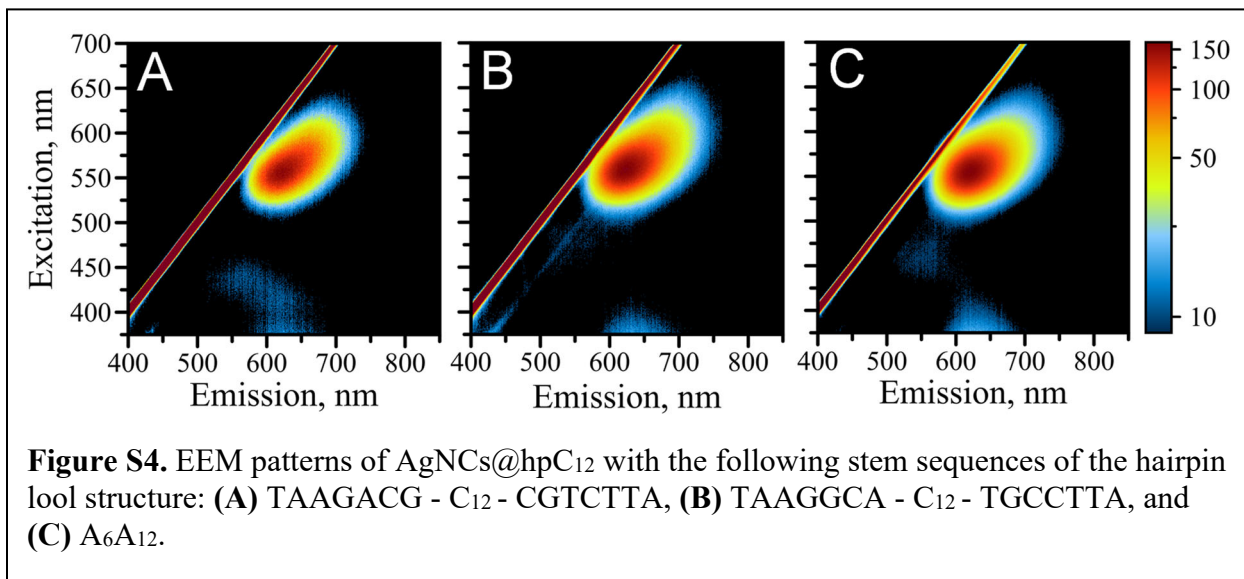


Figure S2. Results of AFM image analysis presented in **Figure 1**. **(A)** Statistical distribution of sizes for AgNC@ssC₁₂, D, measured along the longest axis of observed structures. Fitting the histogram with Gaussian function produces $D_{AV}=5.9\pm 0.2$ nm for the most intense peak. Bigger structures are also evident as indicated by the peaks at greater length. **(B)** Statistical distribution of sizes for AgNC@hpC₁₂ producing only one peak at $D_{AV}=6.0\pm 0.2$ nm. The real size of the AgNC is expected to be less than 6 nm due to convolution effect of the AFM tip.

Cytosine-rich hairpin-loop DNA templates: The single C->T replacement results in change of the fluorescence pattern in EEM but it also reduces the number of templating cytosines in the 12-base long loop. Previously, our group¹ and others² have reported that various sizes of hpC_N loops generate AgNCs@hpC_N with distinct fluorescence patterns. Thus, we looked at how the reduction of the loop size by 1, 2, and 3 cytosines affects the cluster's properties. Figure 4 shows excitation-emission plots (EEM) for AgNCs templated on hairpins with C₉, C₁₀, C₁₁, and C₁₂ loop sizes. The EEM maps were recorded in the 350-700 nm range for the excitation and in the 400-800 nm range for the emission. The EEMs show various patterns of multiple-peaked fluorescence with up to 3 distinct peaks per sample in different parts of the visible spectrum. These observations are in a good agreement with previously published data on hpDNA templates. {O'Neill, 2009 #153} We classify the observed peaks as red I (RI), red II (RII), orange (O), and green (G) with the following positions of lambda maximum: RI=> $\lambda_{EXC}/\lambda_{EM}=565/640$ nm, RII=> $\lambda_{EXC}/\lambda_{EM}=550/625$ nm, O=> $\lambda_{EXC}/\lambda_{EM}=480/600$ nm, and G=> $\lambda_{EXC}/\lambda_{EM}=405/525$ nm. These peaks are similar to the ones observed in T-scanning. The peaks are quite reproducible but present with different intensities for various loop sizes. For example, "orange" is quite strong for hpC₉ and hpC₁₁ and is present only faintly for hpC₁₀. Red peak is RII for smaller loop sizes hpC₉, hpC₁₀, and hpC₁₁ but red-shifts to RI for hpC₁₂. Interestingly, the excitation-emission pattern of hpC₁₁ loop (Fig. S1, D) where the size of the loop is one less cytosine resembles the pattern observed for T1, T2, T3, and T9 replacements, further substantiating our hypothesis that these positions are critical for nanocluster's stability and optical properties.





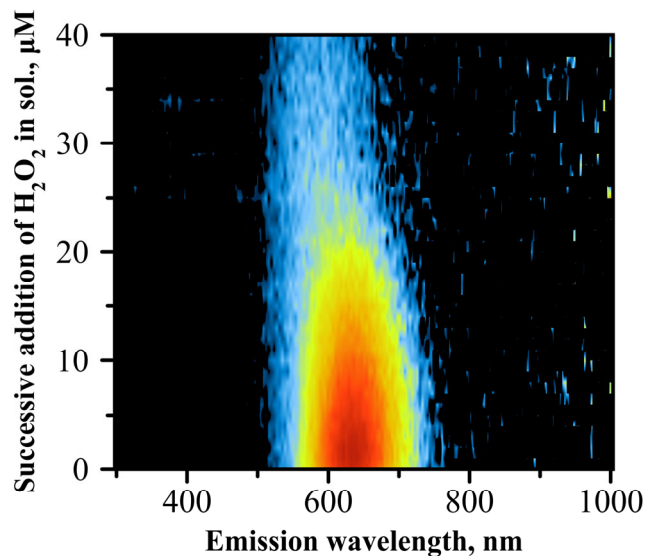


Figure S6. The evolution of emission spectrum for AgNC@hpC12 in response to successive addition of oxidizing agent, H₂O₂.

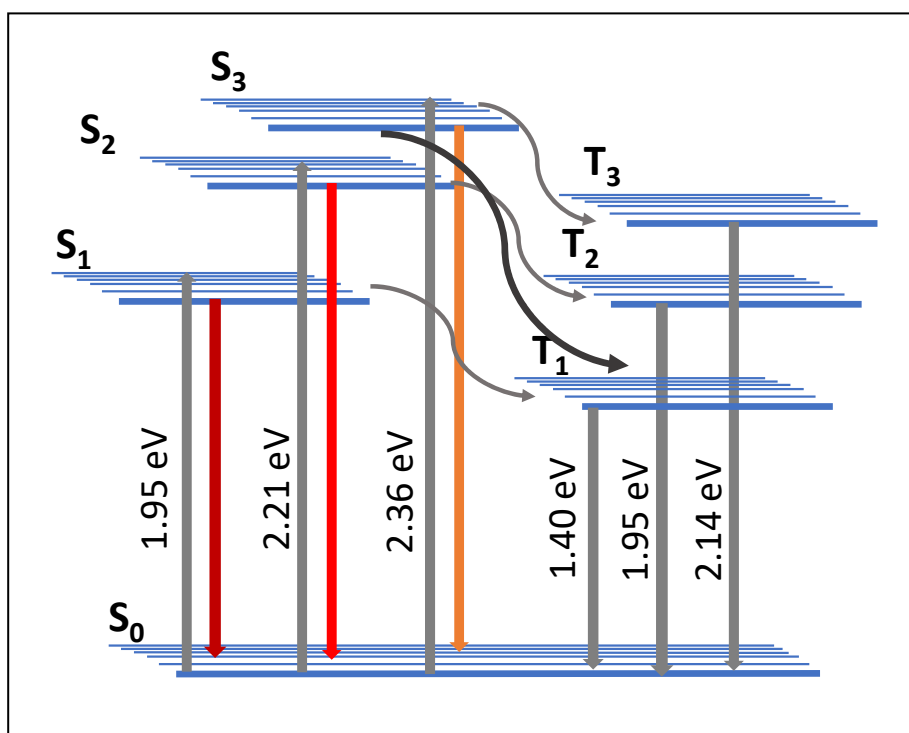


Figure S7. Schematic representation of energy levels for 3 singlet and 3 triplet excited states of Ag₁₀NC@hpC₁₂ computed using TD-DFT analysis. The transition *S₃ to *T₁ is depicted with a bold arrow.

Table S1. List of the atomic percentage of the silicon substrate, phosphorous, and silver detected during the SEM-EDS scans. Based on the known number of phosphorus atoms for the sequence of hpC₁₂, the number of silver atoms is calculated using the ratio of signal intensity between phosphorus and silver.

Exp #	P %	Ag %	P/Ag	# of P	# of Ag
1	4.45	1.71	2.60	25	9.61
2	5.62	2.72	2.07	25	12.07
3	4.85	2.46	1.97	25	12.69
4	5.63	2.92	1.93	25	12.95
5	3.85	1.55	2.48	25	10.08
6	3.59	1.25	2.87	25	8.71
7	4.54	2.27	2.00	25	12.50
8	4.39	1.40	3.14	25	7.96
9	4.24	1.52	2.79	25	8.96
10	3.52	1.48	2.38	25	10.50
11	3.94	0.96	4.10	25	6.09
12	4.55	2.00	2.28	25	10.96
13	4.63	1.92	2.41	25	10.37
Average	4.45	1.86	2.54	25	10.26
STDEV	0.66	0.59	0.60	0	2.06
SEM	0.18	0.16	0.17	0	0.57

Table S2. Calculated optical transitions for the Ag₁₀NC@hpC₁₂ nanoclusters of +2 charge using different Density Functionals and different basis sets.

DFT Level of Theory		Peak I (red I)		Peak II (red II)		Peak III (orange)	
Exchange Density Functional	Basis Set	Position, eV	Oscillator strength, f	Position, eV	Oscillator strength, f	Position, eV	Oscillator strength, f
B3LYP	LANL2DZ	1.77	0.1537	2.11	0.0199	2.15	0.0669
B3PW91	LANL2DZ	1.81	0.1485	2.21	0.0311	2.26	0.0628
M06-2X	LANL2DZ	1.95	0.1494	2.19	0.0088	2.40	0.2589
M06-2X	LANL2MB	1.83	0.4319	2.00	0.0866	2.29	0.1140
M06-2X	def2TZVPP	1.91	0.4195	2.22	0.1059	2.34	0.0469
M06-2X	def2QZVPP	1.90	0.4180	2.22	0.1164	2.33	0.0356

Table S3. Calculated optical transitions for the charged Ag₁₀NC@hpC₁₂ nanoclusters using TD-DFT and M06-2X/LANL2DZ combination of functional/basis set.

Total Charge	Peak I (red I)		Peak II (red II)		Peak III (orange)	
	Position, eV	Oscillator strength, f	Position, eV	Oscillator strength, f	Position, eV	Oscillator strength, f
0	1.97	0.6571	2.17	0.2351	-	-
+2	1.95	0.4184	2.19	0.0710	2.36	0.0932
+4	2.00	0.1494	2.20	0.0088	2.40	0.2589
+6	2.04	0.1514	2.20	0.0068	2.40	0.2865
+8	2.04	0.0805	2.27	0.0396	2.44	0.2806
+10	-	-	2.22	0.0317	2.65	0.1220

Additional computational details: Multiple runs using Universal Force Field (UFF) at molecular mechanics level of theory to achieve energy minimum with a convergence factor for energy change tolerance of $10E^{-7}$. Further optimization was achieved via a single geometry optimization run with DFT utilizing M06-2X/LANL2DZ combination of functional/basis set. The DFT optimization was done for Ag₁₀ cluster only, while DNA template was frozen (using 0 and -1 input for respective atoms in Gaussian16). The optimization result and the input list of atoms for Gaussian16 are given below. TD-DFT computation only used Ag atoms and atoms of cytosine bases, while sugar-phosphate backbone and stem of the hairpin were completely removed to save computational time.

Atomic list of geometrically optimized Ag₁₀NC@hpC₁₂ as Gaussian input for TD-DFT calculations of excited states:

C-C_3	0	7.93025	6.85446	0.55102	L
N-N_R	0	8.47293	5.86544	-0.4084	L
C-C_R	0	7.71476	4.77839	-0.80998	L
O-O_R	0	6.58273	4.6134	-0.38945	L
N-N_R	0	8.22792	3.85909	-1.68479	L
C-C_R	0	9.48195	3.98223	-2.18495	L
N-N_R	0	9.98258	3.01173	-3.08378	L
C-C_R	0	10.26405	5.07481	-1.80694	L
C-C_R	0	9.73683	6.0106	-0.91468	L
H-H_	0	10.35427	6.85216	-0.63155	L
H-H_	0	11.26722	5.20027	-2.19477	L
C-C_3	0	3.37542	6.81936	2.13613	L
N-N_R	0	4.20687	5.64082	2.47942	L
C-C_R	0	4.12974	4.47778	1.73193	L
O-O_R	0	3.37427	4.3925	0.77853	L
N-N_R	0	4.91281	3.39954	2.04569	L
C-C_R	0	5.77663	3.42903	3.0893	L
N-N_R	0	6.57234	2.29673	3.38157	L
C-C_R	0	5.87321	4.58529	3.86078	L
C-C_R	0	5.07763	5.68371	3.53521	L
H-H_	0	5.16756	6.56803	4.14478	L

H-H_	0	6.55548	4.63899	4.69993	L
H-H_	0	6.4982	1.4462	2.80496	L
H-H_	0	7.2347	2.30652	4.17107	L
C-C_3	0	-0.48106	6.67387	-1.8469	L
N-N_R	0	-0.67539	5.70075	-0.74176	L
C-C_R	0	-0.31639	4.36993	-0.90799	L
O-O_R	0	0.12407	3.96599	-1.9708	L
N-N_R	0	-0.4499	3.48213	0.12618	L
C-C_R	0	-0.92341	3.87261	1.33447	L
N-N_R	0	-1.03839	2.93206	2.38438	L
C-C_R	0	-1.29513	5.19946	1.52848	L
C-C_R	0	-1.16568	6.09876	0.4736	L
H-H_	0	-1.43739	7.12104	0.66314	L
H-H_	0	-1.67338	5.53668	2.48539	L
H-H_	0	-0.75728	1.95229	2.23702	L
H-H_	0	-1.40021	3.212	3.30774	L
C-C_3	0	-5.5566	6.11149	-3.31389	L
N-N_R	0	-5.30295	5.71859	-1.90138	L
C-C_R	0	-4.70296	4.49856	-1.60945	L
O-O_R	0	-4.39668	3.71994	-2.49614	L
N-N_R	0	-4.44722	4.14728	-0.32304	L
C-C_R	0	-4.75596	4.96346	0.71253	L
N-N_R	0	-4.46597	4.56143	2.03679	L
C-C_R	0	-5.35138	6.19417	0.45807	L
C-C_R	0	-5.61705	6.5534	-0.86121	L
H-H_	0	-6.05408	7.5194	-1.02251	L
H-H_	0	-5.60123	6.86925	1.26697	L
H-H_	0	-4.0269	3.64694	2.21633	L

H-H_	0	-4.68955	5.17245	2.83585	L
C-C_3	0	-9.80045	2.71085	-2.98341	L
N-N_R	0	-9.12568	2.87054	-1.67299	L
C-C_R	0	-8.55567	1.78439	-1.02527	L
O-O_R	0	-8.57389	0.67428	-1.5265	L
N-N_R	0	-7.96937	1.94113	0.18931	L
C-C_R	0	-7.91589	3.14777	0.80353	L
N-N_R	0	-7.31438	3.26297	2.07738	L
C-C_R	0	-8.46181	4.26168	0.17311	L
C-C_R	0	-9.06345	4.09967	-1.07181	L
H-H_	0	-9.48625	4.97246	-1.53938	L
H-H_	0	-8.42952	5.23848	0.63943	L
H-H_	0	-6.91253	2.43386	2.53811	L
H-H_	0	-7.27641	4.17125	2.5628	L
C-C_3	0	-11.0162	-1.80442	-0.98661	L
N-N_R	0	-11.04191	-0.68449	-0.01954	L
C-C_R	0	-10.3476	-0.74783	1.17928	L
O-O_R	0	-9.70232	-1.73772	1.47939	L
N-N_R	0	-10.37257	0.30328	2.04034	L
C-C_R	0	-11.06643	1.43526	1.76142	L
N-N_R	0	-11.06254	2.51006	2.68042	L
C-C_R	0	-11.7747	1.52791	0.56654	L
C-C_R	0	-11.74766	0.44938	-0.3134	L
H-H_	0	-12.29644	0.53173	-1.2361	L
H-H_	0	-12.33588	2.42006	0.3177	L
H-H_	0	-10.53416	2.4373	3.56168	L
H-H_	0	-11.58219	3.37752	2.48091	L
C-C_3	0	-8.4014	-6.65378	-0.22698	L

N-N_R	0	-8.07934	-5.40371	-0.95482	L
C-C_R	0	-7.33325	-4.40776	-0.34517	L
O-O_R	0	-6.93498	-4.53996	0.79695	L
N-N_R	0	-7.02797	-3.26782	-1.01634	L
C-C_R	0	-7.42411	-3.07078	-2.29678	L
N-N_R	0	-7.08021	-1.87238	-2.96344	L
C-C_R	0	-8.15973	-4.05916	-2.94489	L
C-C_R	0	-8.48305	-5.22284	-2.25108	L
H-H_	0	-9.05362	-5.97749	-2.77527	L
H-H_	0	-8.4769	-3.93372	-3.97158	L
H-H_	0	-6.53018	-1.149	-2.47803	L
H-H_	0	-7.37428	-1.7059	-3.9369	L
C-C_3	0	-3.52435	-6.3819	1.69168	L
N-N_R	0	-3.96813	-6.0834	0.31273	L
C-C_R	0	-3.6458	-4.86862	-0.27143	L
O-O_R	0	-3.0022	-4.03367	0.33994	L
N-N_R	0	-4.0244	-4.59894	-1.54692	L
C-C_R	0	-4.71889	-5.49832	-2.28633	L
N-N_R	0	-5.0941	-5.17851	-3.61148	L
C-C_R	0	-5.05399	-6.73112	-1.73033	L
C-C_R	0	-4.66448	-7.00696	-0.42078	L
H-H_	0	-4.93049	-7.97075	-0.00672	L
H-H_	0	-5.60712	-7.46689	-2.30029	L
H-H_	0	-5.62503	-5.84841	-4.1869	L
H-H_	0	-4.84533	-4.26315	-4.01364	L
C-C_3	0	0.66238	-5.01033	2.71609	L
N-N_R	0	-0.14182	-3.77626	2.91055	L
C-C_R	0	-0.39584	-2.91078	1.85613	L

O-O_R	0	0.03631	-3.14023	0.73994	L
N-N_R	0	-1.16108	-1.78731	2.04812	L
C-C_R	0	-1.67475	-1.48449	3.26625	L
N-N_R	0	-2.45887	-0.32012	3.4364	L
C-C_R	0	-1.43411	-2.33457	4.34088	L
C-C_R	0	-0.6704	-3.48036	4.13823	L
H-H_	0	-0.50482	-4.122	4.98578	L
H-H_	0	-1.83768	-2.11872	5.32234	L
H-H_	0	-2.85631	-0.0803	4.35652	L
H-H_	0	-2.63747	0.30735	2.64119	L
C-C_3	0	3.28841	-5.65278	-1.52741	L
N-N_R	0	3.58473	-4.5618	-0.5635	L
C-C_R	0	2.96962	-3.32258	-0.69496	L
O-O_R	0	2.20119	-3.09601	-1.61411	L
N-N_R	0	3.21823	-2.33309	0.20092	L
C-C_R	0	4.05668	-2.51647	1.24869	L
N-N_R	0	4.28148	-1.46227	2.16363	L
C-C_R	0	4.68261	-3.74745	1.41556	L
C-C_R	0	4.43427	-4.75939	0.49285	L
H-H_	0	4.91481	-5.70464	0.66422	L
H-H_	0	5.34894	-3.92521	2.25011	L
H-H_	0	3.80982	-0.55545	2.03526	L
H-H_	0	4.91512	-1.58581	2.96684	L
C-C_3	0	8.22448	-4.90676	-4.03651	L
N-N_R	0	8.06976	-4.34547	-2.68379	L
C-C_R	0	7.53334	-3.0878	-2.5015	L
O-O_R	0	7.17616	-2.41223	-3.45523	L
N-N_R	0	7.41119	-2.55701	-1.25341	L

C-C_R	0	7.76952	-3.19358	-0.1894	L
N-N_R	0	7.63024	-2.58008	1.07953	L
C-C_R	0	8.3169	-4.55925	-0.29955	L
C-C_R	0	8.45082	-5.09335	-1.51792	L
H-H_	0	8.82677	-6.10058	-1.58229	L
H-H_	0	8.5971	-5.12183	0.58578	L
H-H_	0	7.24372	-1.6281	1.15925	L
H-H_	0	7.91001	-3.07917	1.93624	L
C-C_3	0	14.94938	-4.38827	-0.85597	L
N-N_R	0	14.05967	-4.42821	0.32448	L
C-C_R	0	14.35257	-3.70412	1.47054	L
O-O_R	0	15.35965	-3.02036	1.54157	L
N-N_R	0	13.51573	-3.74852	2.53937	L
C-C_R	0	12.37902	-4.4883	2.52264	L
N-N_R	0	11.53411	-4.50563	3.65649	L
C-C_R	0	12.05467	-5.22282	1.3839	L
C-C_R	0	12.91451	-5.17777	0.28888	L
H-H_	0	12.64932	-5.74563	-0.59117	L
H-H_	0	11.15149	-5.81877	1.34299	L
H-H_	0	11.78057	-3.9597	4.49481	L
H-H_	0	10.66593	-5.06087	3.66049	L
Ag-	0	6.97309	2.27161	-2.16331	H
Ag-	0	5.29389	0.21671	-1.4337	H
Ag-	0	4.71665	1.74253	0.81794	H
Ag-	0	2.68935	0.85734	-0.80362	H
Ag-	0	0.09697	1.50178	-0.17625	H
Ag-	0	-1.566	-0.58176	0.39772	H
Ag-	0	-3.83474	1.02697	0.6015	H

Ag-	0	-3.93141	-1.34475	-0.80571	H
Ag-	0	-6.23147	-0.34139	0.28767	H
Ag-	0	-5.18741	-2.75221	1.24424	H
H-H_	0	10.93338	3.0927	-3.47285	L
H-H_	0	9.39817	2.20981	-3.36084	L
H-H_	0	14.54677	-5.01109	-1.62727	L
H-H_	0	15.92118	-4.74265	-0.5823	L
H-H_	0	15.02395	-3.38218	-1.21252	L
H-H_	0	8.65513	-5.884	-3.97006	L
H-H_	0	8.86465	-4.27341	-4.61439	L
H-H_	0	7.26604	-4.97066	-4.50791	L
H-H_	0	3.85242	-6.52339	-1.26513	L
H-H_	0	3.55568	-5.33872	-2.51475	L
H-H_	0	2.24369	-5.88195	-1.49658	L
H-H_	0	0.74087	-5.535	3.64531	L
H-H_	0	1.64059	-4.74789	2.37095	L
H-H_	0	0.18484	-5.63684	1.99198	L
H-H_	0	-3.86305	-7.35738	1.97209	L
H-H_	0	-3.93307	-5.6558	2.36297	L
H-H_	0	-2.45585	-6.34848	1.73761	L
H-H_	0	-8.98012	-7.29512	-0.85838	L
H-H_	0	-8.96234	-6.41943	0.65353	L
H-H_	0	-7.49426	-7.14939	0.0494	L
H-H_	0	-11.6127	-1.55357	-1.83876	L
H-H_	0	-11.40908	-2.6851	-0.52299	L
H-H_	0	-10.00822	-1.98432	-1.29729	L
H-H_	0	-10.17037	3.65956	-3.31205	L
H-H_	0	-10.61586	2.02525	-2.88349	L

H-H_	0	-9.10214	2.33248	-3.70041	L
H-H_	0	-6.02104	7.07513	-3.33816	L
H-H_	0	-6.20228	5.39268	-3.77359	L
H-H_	0	-4.62888	6.14918	-3.84572	L
H-H_	0	-0.81389	7.64114	-1.53303	L
H-H_	0	-1.04603	6.36186	-2.70034	L
H-H_	0	0.55671	6.71966	-2.10345	L
H-H_	0	3.5775	7.61165	2.8263	L
H-H_	0	2.34035	6.55382	2.19107	L
H-H_	0	3.60834	7.14317	1.14326	L
H-H_	0	8.66233	7.61318	0.73351	L
H-H_	0	7.6883	6.36375	1.47057	L
H-H_	0	7.04802	7.30105	0.1422	L

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