https://www.hermanus.astronomy@gmail.com

"The Southern Cross"

The Hermanus Astronomy Centre's Monthly Newsletter

September 2026

MONTHLY MEETINGS

At the monthly meeting held on **TUESDAY 18TH AUGUST, Professor Markus Böttcher** was our guest speaker. His topic was, "COSMIC GHOST PARTICLES: NEUTRINOS AND THE NEW ERA OF MULTI-MESSENGER ASTRONOMY".

Astronomical objects (such as stars and galaxies) emit not only light and other forms of radiation, but also high-energy elementary particles. The most mysterious of these are called neutrinos. Prof. Böttcher explored how neutrinos—tiny, nearly massless particles—are opening a new era of multi-messenger astronomy, allowing scientists to probe extreme cosmic events like black holes, supernovae, and active galaxies in ways traditional light-based astronomy cannot. His talk explained what we know about neutrinos, the instruments with which they have been detected, and the likely sources of astrophysical neutrinos, in particular, our sun and the active centres of some galaxies.

Follow the link below to access the full presentation.

The YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=679rz2GL0NY

At our next meeting, scheduled for **September 15th** guest speaker **Leyya Stockenstroom** will present, "THE UNIVERSE BEYOND WHAT THE EYE CAN SEE: ASTRONOMY ACROSS THE ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM."

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP ACTIVITIES

Cosmology

The **Aug 4th** meeting featured the second half of the Michelle Thaller presentation, "MODERN PHYSICS IS FORCING US TO RETHINK EXISTENCE."

Michelle Thaller concludes that modern physics is forcing us to abandon common-sense notions of space, time, and reality. From Einstein's relativity to quantum entanglement and the holographic principle, each revolution reveals that our perception is a limited filter. The universe is far stranger than we can imagine, and the deepest truths may lie beyond human cognition. Science is a process of approaching reality, not possessing it, and humility—along with a willingness to abandon beautiful, but wrong ideas—is essential for genuine progress.

See below for the links to the video and discussion:

The YouTube link: https://youtu.be/RGbZsE7qFgw

The discussion link: https://youtu.be/TGgp4l3sf60

Our next cosmology meeting will be on **1st September** and will feature 'Brian Greene' discussing, **"**Why It's IMPOSSIBLE for Time to Have a Beginning"

What came before the Big Bang? Can time itself have a starting point — or does that question even make sense? In this mind-bending exploration, world-renowned theoretical physicist Brian Greene challenges one of the deepest assumptions in all of science: that time had a beginning.

For further information regarding the Cosmology Group, contact Derek Duckitt – derek.duckitt@gmail.com

Study Group

On **25th August** we watched a Neil degrasse Tyson video titled, "The Science of Sleep"

What's the real difference between dreaming and waking consciousness? Neil deGrasse Tyson and co-host Chuck Nice and Gary O'Reilly sat down with sleep expert Matt Walker to answer fan questions about the most mysterious thing humans do every single night: sleeping & dreaming. What's the science behind your sleep paralysis demon?

If you wish to revisit this fascinating subject and review the group discussion that followed, then follow the links below.

YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGKg_JjIGGQ

The discussion link: https://youtu.be/HCp_-GfklP8

The topic for the study group scheduled for **29th September** will be announced at a later date.

For further information regarding the Study Group, contact Peter Harvey petermh@hermanus.co.za

Observing.

Optimal dates for **Sep 2026**:

SUGGESTED EVENING OBSERVATION WINDOWS
(Lunar observations notwithstanding)

Moonless windows			*Astronomical night*
September 2 to September 14	*Rises* *Sets*	**23h01 (80%)** **22h12 (10%)**	**19h54 - 05h31**

Moonwatch: A few days either side of **First Quarter** (18th Sep).

There is an excellent opportunity to observe the Lunar 'X' and 'V' during September. Look out for them at about 19h30 on Friday 18th September.

Refer to Peter Harvey's excellent "Skynotes" for a summary of Astronomical Phenomenon forecast for the month.

Outreach.

The Seestar S30 pro smart telescope was recently demonstrated to staff and learners from the Lukhanyo Primary School. The HAC plans to loan the telescope to the Lukhanyo Science Club, and their members were invited to a stargazing event to witness its capabilities. Science teacher Zimkhitha Buyile, together with the HAC, will develop a course of study for the pupils and we look forward to the exciting discoveries that their observations will yield in the weeks ahead.

Above: Cliff Path Star Gazing event.
Right: (L.t.r) Derek Duckitt, Zimkhitha Buyile, Pierre de Villiers and Masonwabe Nomoya

Absent Friends

It is with great sadness that the HAC heard of Johan Retief's passing on Tuesday 4th August. We extend our sincere condolences to Helena and their families in this difficult time. May they be blessed with the strength to achieve peace and acceptance.

Johan was one the first members of the HAC and made many significant contributions to the HAC's growth and success. He was a valued and respected member of the committee for many years, was one of the most prolific guest speakers whose talks were always thoroughly researched, well-presented and much enjoyed by all attendees. He took over drafting the monthly Sky Maps when Steve Kleyn wanted to hand over the baton and was Membership Secretary even after he had resigned from the committee. He co-presented a Beginners Astronomy course for almost two years, followed by his Telescope Skills Interest Group. He also founded the Hawston Ruimtekadette and presented weekly talks on Astronomy to Grade 11 learners in Afrikaans, coining some new terms as he was rigid about speaking only Afrikaans. His keen technical mind made him a mandatory participant in all the designs that the HAC was involved in over the years, ending with his authorship of a number of the plaques at the Gearings Point Astronomy Education Display. He practised astronomy with regular sunspot reports to ASSA - for which he received an award – and he also designed, constructed and operated a home observatory (the "Fisherhaven Medium Telescope"). When he decided that his observing days were over, he donated his telescope to Derek whom he knew would use it.

Johan's huge and varied contributions to the HAC was deservedly acknowledged by conferring Honorary Membership on him.

Johan is no longer with us, but he has left us and his family with countless memories that will be fondly cherished.

Rest in Peace, Johan.

From Tim Cooper

The link to the latest Comet, Asteroid and Meteor Section:

https://assa.saao.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2026/06/ASSA-CAMNotes-2026-Number-3.pdf

MNASSA

The Monthly Notes of the Astronomical Society of Southern Africa are available on:

http://www.mnassa.org.za/

ASSA Shallow Deep Sky Bulletin

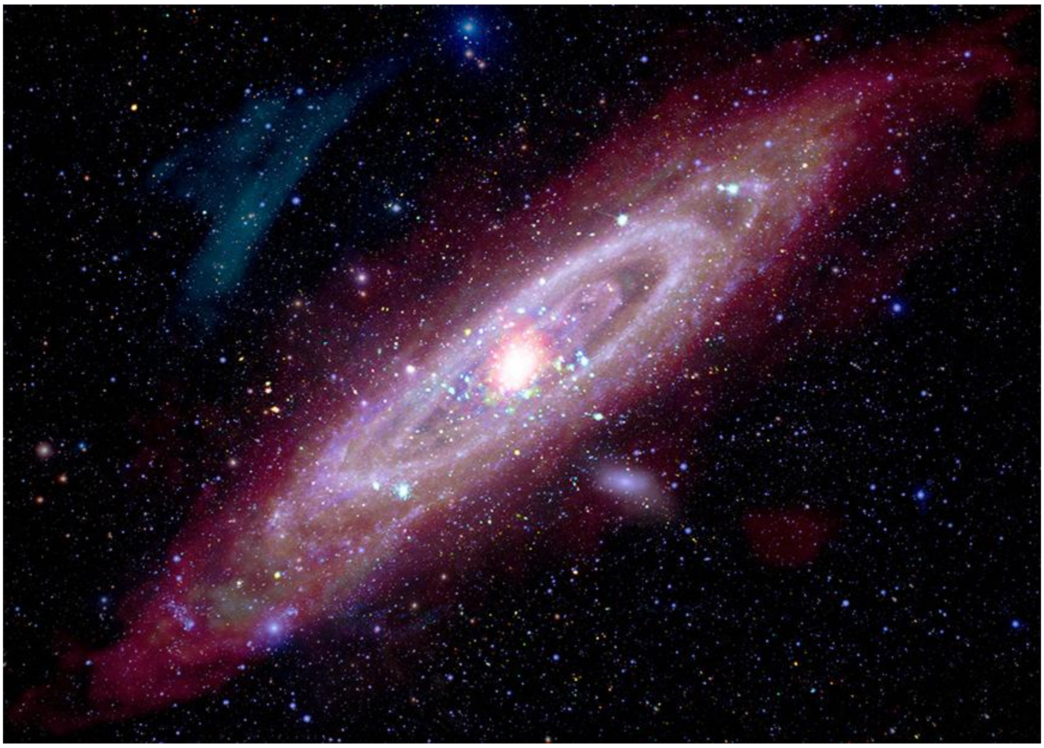
The latest Shallow and Deep Sky Bulletin by the ASSA Director, Colin Steyn, is now available for download from https://assa.saao.ac.za/publications/deep-sky

Astronomy News August 2026 continued overleaf…

ASTRONOMY NEWS August 2026

Compiled by Pieter Kotzé

AUGUST ASTRONOMY PICTURE

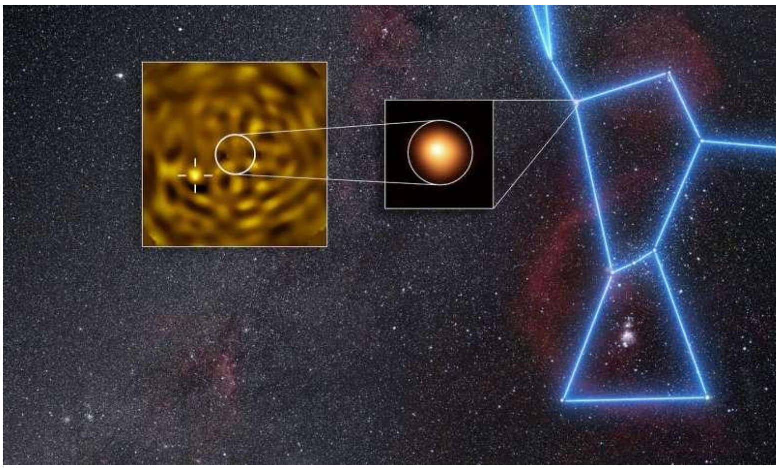


Credit: X-ray: NASA/CXO/UMass/Z. Li & Q.D. Wang, ESA/XMM-Newton; Infrared: NASA/JPL-Caltech/WISE, Spitzer, NASA/JPL-Caltech/K. Gordon (U. Az), ESA/Herschel, ESA/Planck, NASA/IRAS, NASA/COBE; Radio: NSF/GBT/WSRT/IRAM/C. Clark (STScI); Ultraviolet: NASA/JPL-Caltech/GALEX; Optical: Andromeda, Unexpected Marcel Drechsler, Xavier Strottner, Yann Sainty & J. Sahner, T. Kottary. Composite image processing: L. Frattare, K. Arcand, J.Major

Many Views of Andromeda

Sometimes a little distance can provide a little clarity. It's difficult, for example, for us to get a complete view of our own Milky Way Galaxy since we're embedded within it, and some parts of the Galaxy are hidden from our direct view. So in some ways our best view of the Milky Way comes by studying nearby external spiral galaxies. Fortunately, one of our galactic neighbours is M31, the Andromeda galaxy. M31 is close enough that you can view it with the unaided eye from a suitably dark site. But M31 is distant enough (about 2.5 million light years) you need a powerful telescope really study it (or, more accurately, study it as it was 2.5 million years ago). And to really study it you want to view the galaxy over as wide a band of the electromagnetic spectrum as possible: X-rays to study the populations of accreting black holes, neutron stars, normal stars, and supernova remnants, UV and optical to study normal stars, infrared and radio to study clouds of gas and dust and how they interact with Andromeda's magnetic field. The image above is a multi-wavelength composite image of the Andromeda galaxy from some of the world's most powerful telescopes, including X-ray images from the Chandra X-ray Observatory and the XMM-Newton X-ray telescope (represented in red, green, and blue); ultraviolet data from GALEX (blue); optical data from astrophotographers using ground based telescopes; infrared data from the Spitzer Space Telescope, the Infrared Astronomy Satellite, COBE, and the Planck and Herschel satellite observatories (red, orange, and purple), and data from the Westerbork Synthesis Radio Telescope (in red-orange).

Astronomers find strongest evidence yet that Betelgeuse has a companion



Using ESO's Very Large Telescope (VLT), astronomers have obtained the clearest image ever of what likely is Betelgeuse B, a star orbiting Betelgeuse. Betelgeuse is a red supergiant star in the Orion constellation. Its brightness changes periodically, and for decades astronomers had suspected that some of these variations could be due to a companion star orbiting around it. The middle inset in this image was taken in January 2019 with the SPHERE instrument at ESO's VLT, and shows Betelgeuse itself. The image in the inset on the left was taken in December 2024, when the companion was predicted to be furthest apart from Betelgeuse as seen from Earth. In this inset Betelgeuse has been removed, revealing a source (marked with a crosshair) consistent with being Betelgeuse B. Credit: ESO/M. Montargès et al. *Background: N. Rissinger (skysurvey.org)*

At long last, astronomers have firm evidence that Betelgeuse, one of the most famous stars in the night sky, is not alone. Using the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope (ESO's VLT), a team led by French researcher Miguel Montargès obtained the clearest image yet of what is likely Betelgeuse B, the star orbiting Betelgeuse. "This is the conclusion of a century-long quest," Montargès says. "We have shown that Betelgeuse is not single, it is accompanied by a faint stellar companion," says Montargès, an astronomer at the Observatoire de Paris-PSL, France, and lead author of the study published in *Astronomy & Astrophysics*. Betelgeuse—a reddish star in the constellation Orion that is easily visible with the naked eye and is known to change in brightness—has been observed for millennia. Betelgeuse B was directly imaged, meaning that light from the star itself was detected, using the SPHERE instrument on ESO's VLT in Chile's Atacama Desert. While there was evidence for the existence of this companion star, including a possible direct detection with the Gemini North Telescope in Hawaiʻi, U.S., this is the strongest evidence for, and clearest image yet of, Betelgeuse B.

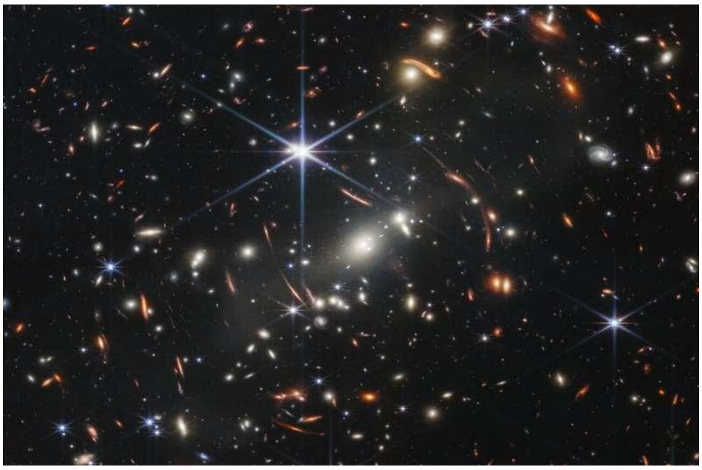
https://phys.org/news/2026-07-astronomers-strongest-evidence-betelgeuse-companion.html

Rubin Observatory opens a deep window on a famous cosmic field

A new NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory image featuring hundreds of thousands of distant galaxies in and around the COSMOS field marks the observatory's first LSST Camera image and catalog release for science. Credit: NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory/NOIRLab/SLAC/AURA

A new Vera C. Rubin Observatory image featuring hundreds of thousands of distant galaxies in and around the COSMOS field marks the observatory's first LSST Camera image and catalog release for science. Packed into this single image from Rubin Observatory are many different kinds of galaxies: spirals with delicate arms, smooth elliptical galaxies, distorted merging galaxies, and faint red galaxies from the distant universe. Only a relatively small number of bright stars from our own Milky Way appear in the foreground, leaving an unusually clear view of galaxies stretching far into the distance. This image was captured with Rubin's 3.2-gigapixel LSST Camera—the largest digital camera in the world, mounted on the 8.4-meter Simonyi Survey Telescope. It features the well-known and well-studied region of sky known as the COSMOS field. It was created by stacking hundreds of individual observations and contains more than half a million galaxies and more than 50,000 stars. https://phys.org/news/2026-08-rubin-observatory-deep-window-famous.html

Astronomers find a new object from the early universe using Webb data

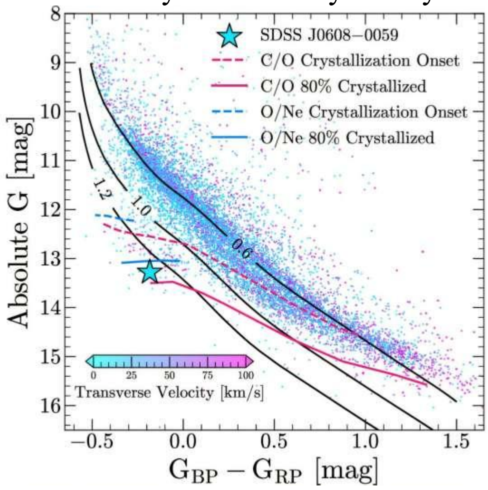


The MACS J0308.9+2645 cluster, as captured by Webb's Near-Infrared Camera (NIRCam). Credit: NASA/ESA/CSA/STScI

Since it became operational in 2022, the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) has released some truly breathtaking views of the cosmos. These images highlight how advancements since the days of the venerable Hubble Space Telescope are now providing the deepest and clearest views of the cosmos to date. This was especially evident with the galaxy cluster MACS J0308.9+2645, a deep field image originally taken by Hubble showcasing galaxy clusters and several gravitational lenses. These lenses, in turn, revealed even more distant galaxies that existed 13 billion years ago, when the universe was just 1 billion years old. These galaxies appear as distorted "gravitational arcs" in the image, their light having been warped and amplified by the MACS J0308.9+2645 cluster's gravitational field. As it turns out, there were more galaxies remaining to be found. In a recent paper, astrophysicist Homer Dávila Gutierrez identified another gravitational arc candidate in the galaxy cluster MACS J0308.9+2645. The galaxy candidate Gutierrez observed is characteristic of this phenomenon, having an elongated and curved morphology. He found A1 while searching through 54 public JWST/NIRCam fields and evaluating 1,591 possible candidates. Of these, only A1 was considered a robust candidate for a gravitational arc that could have existed when the universe was very young. https://phys.org/news/2026-08-astronomers-early-universe-webb.html

An ultramassive white dwarf half Earth's size may hold a rare oxygen-neon core

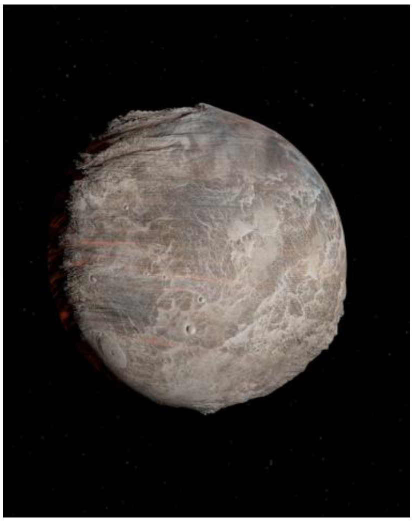
Astronomers have found evidence that one of the most massive white dwarfs known has an oxygen-neon core instead of the more common carbon-oxygen core. The finding is important because the composition of a white dwarf's core determines how it will evolve. Typically, white dwarfs have a mass of 0.5–0.7 times the sun's mass. Such objects have a core made up mainly of carbon and oxygen (C/O core). When they have stellar companions, these dense objects can accumulate matter from them and eventually produce a Type Ia supernova. Ultramassive white dwarfs, with masses above roughly 1.05–1.1 times the sun's mass, tell a different story that is not yet fully understood. These more massive white dwarfs are thought to form from "ancestor" or progenitor stars in the range of about 8–10 times the sun's mass. In these heavier progenitors, the core reaches higher temperatures and densities, allowing carbon to ignite and fuse further into oxygen and neon (O/Ne core).



SDSS J0608−0059's position on this brightness-color diagram confirms it is ultramassive. It sits well below the main white dwarf cooling track. Evolutionary tracks for white dwarfs with masses of 0.6, 1.0, and 1.2 solar masses are marked in black (using C/O core evolutionary tracks from A. Bédard et al. 2020), and stars are colored by their transverse velocities calculated from Gaia astrometry. Credit: Stefan M. Arseneau et al., The Astrophysical Journal (2026). DOI: 10.3847/1538-4357/ae7f0b

This does not happen in the cores of lower-mass stars, which stop fusing once they have built up carbon and oxygen, lacking the required core temperatures. These higher-mass white dwarfs are interesting because, with oxygen-neon cores, they are thought to end their lives differently than typical carbon-oxygen white dwarfs, which end up producing a Type Ia supernova. https://phys.org/news/2026-08-ultramassive-white-dwarf-earth-size.html

Mercury is the Solar System's smallest planet



Representative image of a rocky world. This stock photograph is illustrative and is not a spacecraft image of Mercury. Photo by Zelch Csaba on Pexels.

Mercury is the smallest planet in the Solar System, but most of the distance from its centre to its surface passes through metal. NASA puts the radius of Mercury's metallic core at about 2,074 kilometres, compared with a planetary radius of 2,440 kilometres. That is roughly 85 per cent of the planet's radius. The percentage needs reading carefully. It describes radius, not volume, and it does not mean the remaining 15 per cent is all crust. NASA estimates that Mercury's combined rocky mantle and crust are about 400 kilometres thick. There is also evidence that part of the core remains molten or liquid, which helps explain how such a small world still generates a magnetic field. I find the surface consequence more revealing than the ratio itself. As Mercury lost interior heat, the planet contracted. Its rigid outer shell had to fit around a slightly smaller interior, so parts of the crust broke and were pushed over neighbouring ground. The result is a global population of long, curved cliffs that record the cooling of the planet below them. Its internal arrangement is not simply a solid iron ball wrapped in stone. Measurements of Mercury's gravity, rotation and magnetic field from NASA's MESSENGER spacecraft indicate a layered interior, including a metallic core that is at least partly liquid. The reason Mercury ended up with so much metal is also unsettled. Proposed explanations have included the loss of rocky material during an early collision, extreme heating near the young Sun and formation from unusually metal-rich starting material. https://spacedaily.com/t-mercury-is-the-solar-systems-smallest-planet-but-its-metallic-core-fills-about-85-per-cent-of-its-radius-leaving-a-rocky-shell-so-thin-that-cooling-has-crumpled-the-surface-into-cliffs-hundreds-of-k/

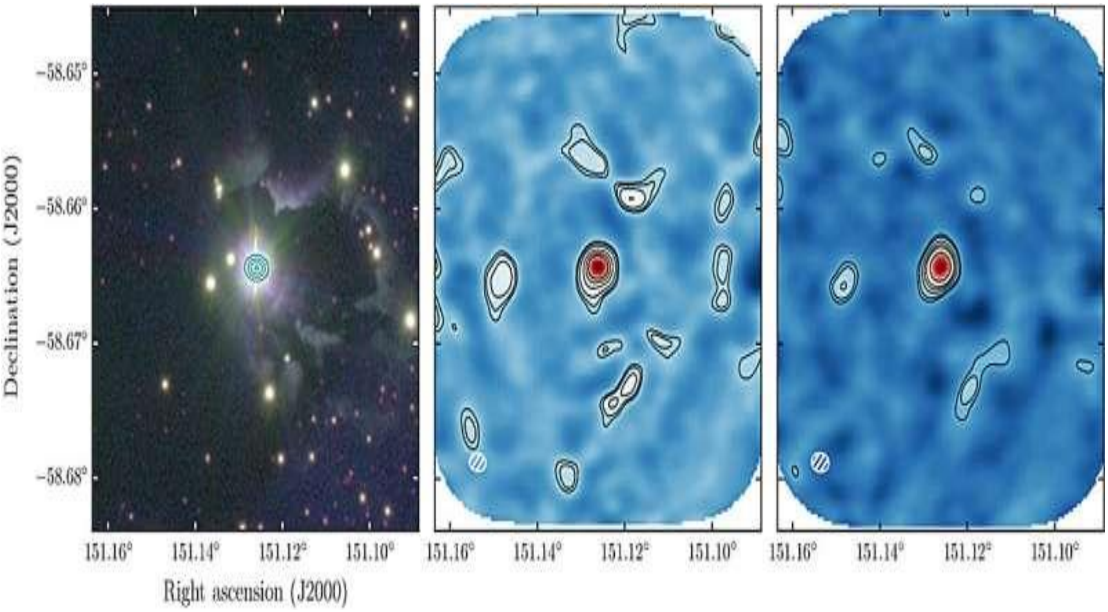
Webb reveals oxygen-rich dust and water surviving near Milky Way's central black hole

Using the NASA/ESA/CSA James Webb Space Telescope, an international team of astronomers has discovered that dust and water can form and survive surprisingly close to the supermassive black hole at the center of the Milky Way galaxy. The observations reveal that the evolved star IRS 3 continues to enrich its surroundings with newly formed material despite the intense radiation environment around Sagittarius A*. By analyzing the star's infrared light with Webb's Mid-Infrared Instrument (MIRI), the research team identified clear signatures of oxygen-rich dust and, for the first time, detected water in the star's surrounding envelope. The results show that even under the harsh conditions near a supermassive black hole, evolved stars like IRS 3 can still produce dust and other materials important for the creation of future generations of stars and planets.

IRS 3 Field (NIRCam and MIRI image). Credit: European Space Agency

IRS 3 has reached a stage near the end of its life called the asymptotic giant branch phase. Stars in this phase of life are huge, cool and luminous, and they shed gas into space with their powerful stellar winds. This cast-off stellar material is one of the most important sources of cosmic dust, but it was not clear whether it could be produced by a star so close to a supermassive black hole. "Galactic centers are among the most extreme environments, so understanding whether stars can continue enriching their surroundings there is an important question," said lead author Florian Peißker of the University of Cologne in Germany. "With Webb, we can directly observe how stars behave under these conditions and see that dust production remains remarkably resilient." IRS 3 is one of the brightest mid-infrared sources in the galactic center and has long stood out because of its enormous dusty envelope. Previous studies suggested the star could be carbon-rich, but the new observations paint a different picture. The Webb data revealed two strong infrared signatures associated with silicate dust, which is composed of silicon and oxygen. These features identify IRS 3 as an oxygen-rich evolved star. https://phys.org/news/2026-08-webb-reveals-oxygen-rich-surviving.html

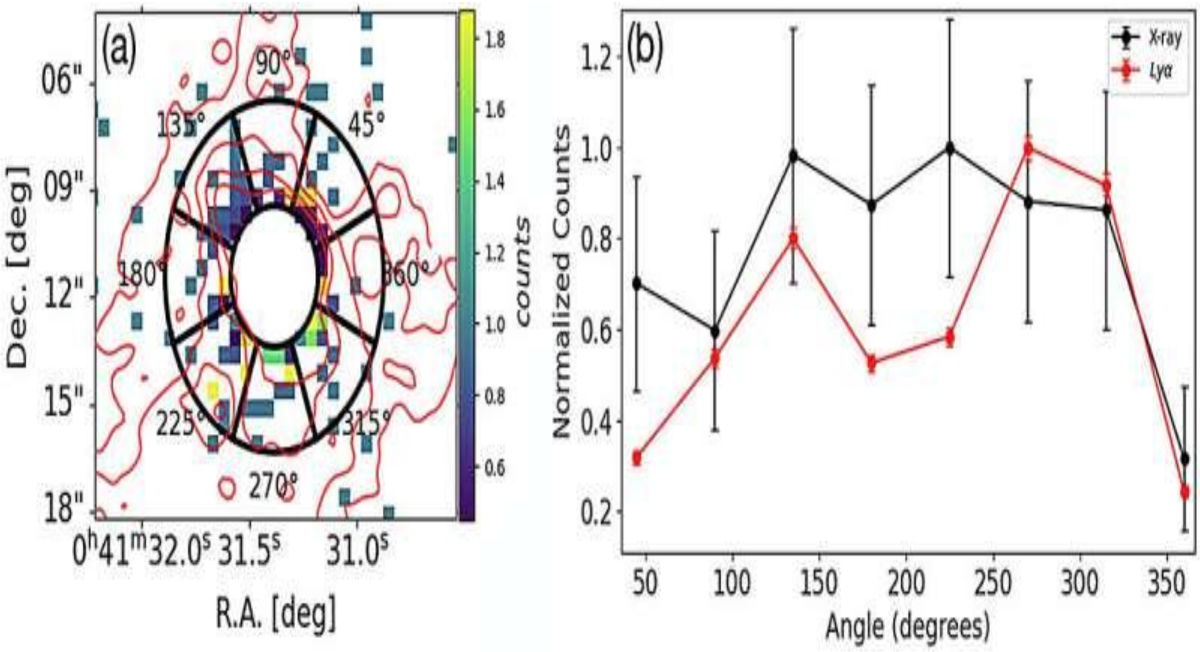
ALMA uncovers sulfur for the first time around a rare class of supergiant star



CO and ^{13}CO emission in the field of HD 87643. Credit: The Astrophysical Journal Letters (2026). DOI: 10.3847/2041-8213/ae7b2b

Astronomers have discovered a chemically rich collection of sulfur-bearing molecules surrounding the rare massive star HD 87643. The observations include the first detection of sulfur monoxide and sulfur dioxide around a B[e] supergiant. B[e] supergiants, or sgB[e], are rare, evolved massive stars that have moved past their main hydrogen-burning phase. They are notable for distinctive emission lines—hence the "[e]" in their name—including rare "forbidden" lines produced by the surrounding gas and dust, along with an infrared glow far more intense than that of ordinary B-type stars. As these stars approach the final stages of their lives, they shed enormous amounts of material, building up messy, complex surroundings: fast winds blasting outward from their poles and a slower, denser, dusty flow encircling their equator like a disk. In this study, the researchers, led by Cristobal Bordiu of INAF Catania Astrophysical Observatory, used Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array's Atacama Compact Array observations to conduct the first detailed millimeter-wavelength survey of HD 87643, a particularly extreme B[e] supergiant. Before this study, only one molecule (carbon monoxide) had been detected in its surroundings. Their analysis revealed emissions from 10 different molecules: CO, ^{13}CO, OCS, H_2CO, SO, ^{33}SO, SO_2, HNCO, $O^{13}CS$ and ^{13}CS. Several contain sulfur, making this the first detection of sulfur chemistry around any B[e] supergiant star. https://phys.org/news/2026-08-alma-uncovers-sulfur-rare-class.html

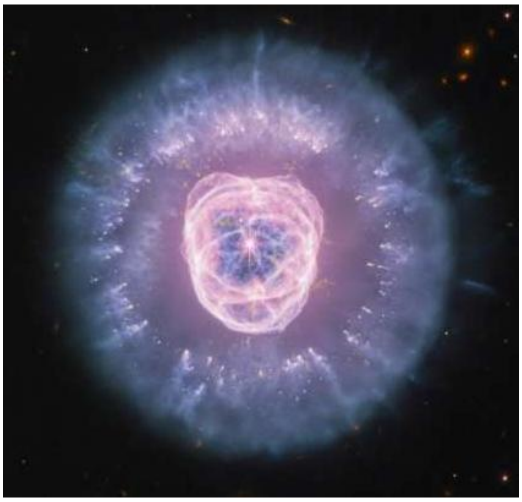
Astronomers catch hot birth of galaxy cluster more than 11 billion light-years away



(a) An X-ray image of the region around the quasar, with the quasar's own light subtracted out. Red outlines trace the boundary of the glowing hydrogen gas cloud (Lyα nebula); black wedges mark the eight pie-slice sectors used to measure brightness in different directions. (b) This graph shows how the brightness of each gas type changes with direction. The red line tracks the hydrogen gas cloud; the black line tracks the X-ray-emitting hot gas. Credit: Astronomy & Astrophysics (2026). DOI: 10.1051/0004-6361/202557020

Astronomers have detected an enormous cloud of gas tens of millions of degrees hot surrounding one of the most extreme structures known in the early universe. The study offers one of the clearest views yet of a galaxy cluster in the making. Using more than 600,000 seconds of observations with NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory, the team found diffuse, extended X-ray emission around a quasar embedded in a dense concentration of galaxies more than 11 billion light-years away. Thousands of galaxies gravitationally bound together in a crowded region are collectively called a galaxy cluster. They can form through gravitational collapse and mergers with smaller structures. When gas is accreted into a reservoir of hot gas—the intracluster medium (ICM)—that fills the gaps between galaxies in a cluster, the infalling gas undergoes shock heating, reaching temperatures of tens to hundreds of millions of Kelvin. The hot gas is primarily detected through X-ray emission. In this new study, a team of researchers led by Andrea Travascio of the University of Milano-Bicocca investigated a protocluster centered on a bright quasar (nicknamed ID1) at a redshift $z = 3.25$, when the universe was less than 2 billion years old. The team published a related paper in 2025 that reported an unusually crowded region with six actively feeding black holes. The number of black holes is far greater than expected in a typical patch of the universe, confirming that this is indeed a protocluster. https://phys.org/news/2026-08-astronomers-hot-birth-galaxy-cluster.html

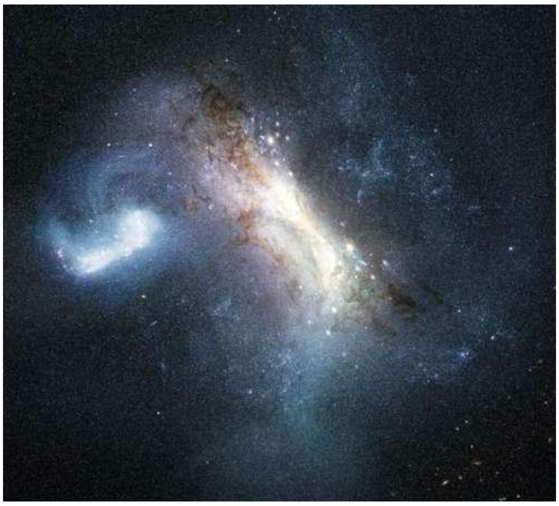
Webb captures clearest image yet of the Lion Nebula



Webb's near- and mid-infrared composite image reveals the complex structure of the Lion Nebula. Credit: NASA/ESA/CSA

The NASA/ESA/CSA James Webb Space Telescope recently imaged NGC 2392 (also known as the Lion Nebula), named for its distinctive appearance, which resembles a lion's face seen head-on. The venerable Hubble Space Telescope (HST) also viewed this nebula in 2000, showcasing its population of hazy, comet-shaped objects. By combining data from its Near-Infrared Camera (NIRCam) and Mid-Infrared Instrument (MIRI), Webb has provided the clearest, most detailed view yet of the Lion Nebula. The image reveals the nebula's complex structure and the white dwarf at its center, which continues to shape it. This stellar remnant created the nebula when it reached the end of its life cycle and shed its outer layers. This star looks like the lion's nose, while the extended gaseous envelope, shells of dust and tendrils resemble its "mane." The central star is so hot that it illuminates everything inside the bubble, ionizing hydrogen and causing it to expand and destroy much of the dust it encounters. https://phys.org/news/2026-08-webb-captures-clearest-image-lion.html

Hubble solves merger mystery from Milky Way's early years



About 12 billion years ago, a dwarf galaxy known as LKH collided with a young Milky Way and merged with it. This artist's concept portrays that collision. NASA's Hubble Space Telescope uncovered definitive evidence of this collision by studying globular star clusters. Credit: Illustration: NASA, ESA, Joseph Olmsted (STScI)

Our home galaxy, the Milky Way, grew to its current size in part by consuming smaller galaxies. Now, new data from NASA's Hubble Space Telescope show definitive evidence of a dwarf galaxy merging with the young Milky Way in the earliest phases of its evolution. This finding extends our knowledge of our galaxy's history 1.8 billion years farther back in time than before. The Milky Way today is a massive spiral galaxy home to hundreds of billions of stars. However, our galaxy wasn't always so large; it has grown by forming new stars from its gas clouds and collecting stars, gas and dark matter from other galaxies through mergers. The most recent massive merger in our galaxy's history took place with the Sagittarius dwarf galaxy, beginning more than 6 billion years ago and still ongoing today. Looking back into the even more distant past, researchers learned that the Milky Way consumed another dwarf galaxy called Gaia-Sausage-Enceladus 10 billion years ago. This ancient merger greatly affected the structure of our galaxy's disk of stars. Other, smaller mergers occurred between these two. But our galaxy's history doesn't stop there. Both observations and simulations have suggested that another large merger preceded these two, though the specifics of the event have been heavily debated. Now, Hubble has uncovered definitive evidence of an earlier merger that occurred about 11.8 billion years ago, or just 2 billion years after the Big Bang. https://phys.org/news/2026-08-hubble-merger-mystery-milky-early.html

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Elaine Sykes	(Treasurer)	083 286 2683
Pete Kogel	(Secretary, Membership, “Southern Cross”, Observing co-ordinator, Beginner’s Astronomy)	082 708 0049 pete.kogel@outlook.com
Mick Fynn	(Educational outreach)	082 443 0848

Non-committee members with portfolio:

Peter Harvey	(“Skynotes”, Study Group SIG co-ordinator)
Deon Krige	{GPAED project, Astro-photography SIG coordinator)
Pieter Kotzé	(“Southern Cross” Astronomy News, Speaker Selector)