

The Hubble Telescope discovered a pair of small dwarf galaxies containing many interesting features

New images sent back from the Hubble Space Telescope show a small dwarf galaxy called IC 3430 located 45 million light years away.

This galaxy is classified as a dwarf galaxy because of its small size and elliptical appearance.

These are smooth and featureless elliptical galaxies that look like a diffuse point of light. They are completely different from spiral galaxies, like our Milky Way, which possess a distinct structure consisting of a central axis and elongated spiral arms.



In this image, the smooth oval shape of IC 3430 can be clearly seen. Elliptical galaxies mostly contain old stars, because they lack the gas needed to form new stars. However, in the case of IC 3430, a core of hot blue stars can be seen at the center of the galaxy. These hot stars are younger, which is rare for elliptical galaxies.

Not long ago, the Hubble Space Telescope also sent back to Earth another image showing a dwarf galaxy, called NGC 5238. This galaxy is located 14.5 million light years from Earth, but has a The structure is different and more complex than regular dwarf galaxies. It contains unusual light spots that appear quite prominently. These are groups of stars called globular clusters.



The structure of this galaxy provides clues about its history. Astronomers think this structure comes from a historical merger, when another galaxy passed too close to this one and the two galaxies merged into one. Such a process causes pockets of stars to form as gravitational disturbances push and pull gas.

Signs of a historical merger include groups of stars within a galaxy with different chemical properties, suggesting they formed in a different environment than neighboring galaxies. By studying smaller galaxies like IC 3430, astronomers can build their understanding of how galaxies form and merge.

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