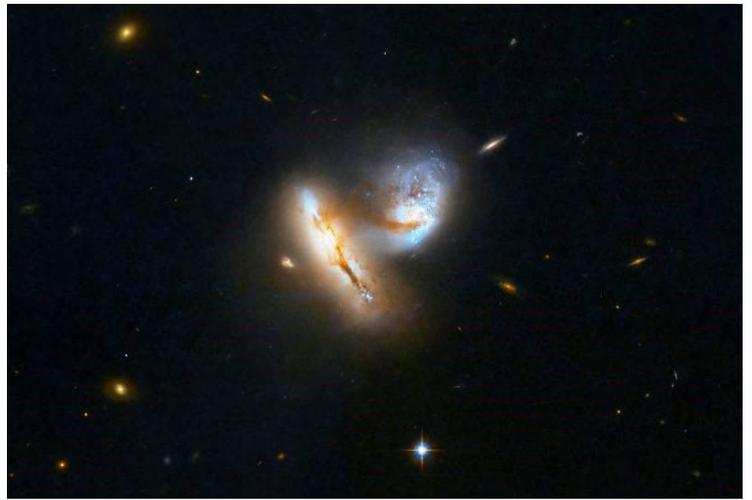


## Check out these interacting galaxies

This Hubble Space Telescope image – released August 9, 2019 – shows a pair of galaxies known as UGC 2369. The two galaxies are interacting, which means that their mutual gravitational attraction is pulling them closer and closer together and distorting their shapes in the process. You can see a bridge of gas, dust and stars connecting the two galaxies, created when they pulled material out into space across the diminishing divide between them.

According to a description of the image from ESA:

*Interaction with others is a common event in the history of most galaxies. For larger galaxies like the Milky Way, the majority of these interactions involve significantly smaller so-called dwarf galaxies. But every few billion years, a more momentous event can occur. For our home galaxy, the next big event will take place in about four billion years, when it will collide with its bigger neighbor, the Andromeda galaxy. Over time, the two galaxies will likely merge into one – already nicknamed Milkomeda.*



Hubble image of an interacting galactic duo known as UGC 2369.

## GALACTIC CREATURES AT PLAY

The pair of strange, luminescent creatures at play in this image are actually galaxies — realms of millions upon millions of stars.

This galactic duo is known as UGC 2369. The galaxies are interacting, meaning that their mutual gravitational attraction is pulling them closer and closer together and distorting their shapes in the process. A tenuous bridge of gas, dust, and stars can be seen connecting the two galaxies,, during which they pulled material out into space across the diminishing divide between them.

Interaction with others is a common event in the history of most galaxies. For larger galaxies like the Milky Way, the majority of these interactions involve significantly smaller so-called dwarf galaxies. But every few aeons, a more momentous event can occur. For our home galaxy, the next big event will take place in about four billion years, when it will collide with its bigger neighbour, the Andromeda Galaxy. Over time, the two galaxies will likely merge into one — already nicknamed Milkomeda.

## A GALACTIC CHERRY BLOSSOM

This galaxy NGC 1156 resembles a delicate cherry blossom tree flowering in springtime in this Hubble Picture of the Week. The many bright "blooms" within the galaxy are in fact stellar nurseries — regions where new stars are springing to life. Energetic light emitted by newborn stars in these regions streams outwards and encounters nearby pockets of hydrogen gas, causing it to glow with a characteristic pink hue.

NGC 1156 is located in the constellation of Aries (The Ram). It is classified as a dwarf irregular galaxy, meaning that it lacks a clear spiral or rounded shape, as other galaxies have, and is on the smaller side, albeit with a relatively large central region that is more densely packed with stars.

Some pockets of gas within NGC 1156 rotate in the opposite direction to the rest of the galaxy, suggesting that there has been a close encounter with another galaxy in NGC 1156's past. The gravity of this other galaxy could have scrambled the likely more orderly rotation of material within NGC 1156, producing the odd behaviour we see today.



AK, with EarthSky and Wikipedia Notes