

March 2026

Meetings at Highland Road Park Observatory and online through YouTube and Jitsi

<https://meet.jit.si/brasmeet>

Calendar:

- 6 March, 7:30PM: BRAS Star Party at HRPO
- 7 March, 9AM: BREC's Rockin' at the Swamp
- 9 March, 7PM: BRAS Meeting at HRPO
- 13 March, 6PM: St. George School STEAM night
- 19 March, 5PM: STEAM night at Glasgow Middle
- 24 March, 7PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe
- 24 March, 8PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Ascension Library, Gonzales (main branch)
- 25 March, 7PM: LSU's Astronomy on Tap at the Varsity
- 28 March, 8:30PM: Star Party at Landolt Observatory
- 29 March, 9AM: BREC's Zippity Zoo Fest

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President's Message

Hi Everyone,

I hope you had a great February. Were you able to get outside and enjoy some of that clear night sky the week leading up to Mardi Gras? I wasn't. Haha! But I'm hoping to get out to do some recreational observing soon.

That's the theme of this month's message...Looking Up. What do YOU do to scratch that amateur astronomy itch? You've actually got several options:

1. Get outside with some equipment. It can be a pair of binoculars or just a small table top scope to look at the Moon or some open clusters, or maybe you've got a nice rig for doing astrophotography.
2. Visit the Observatory or Planetarium. The Highland Road Park Observatory (our "clubhouse"!) is open to the public most Fridays and Saturdays with great opportunities for learning and looking through telescopes. The Planetarium at the Louisiana Art and Science Museum has some great shows throughout the week, too. Also, on April 29th the Baton Rouge Symphony will be putting on a concert there called Vibrant Voyages: A Concert in the Cosmos Exploring Land, Sea and Space.
3. Come out to a club function/activity. Of course, we have our monthly meetings, but as you can see in the Outreach Report there are plenty of other things we're doing around town. ALL of them are astronomy based activities for us and some of them include night sky observing or solar observing.
4. The old fallback...watching shows at home. There is plenty of quality programming on various channels and tons more online. If you learn something cool, don't forget to come share it with your fellow members! We even have a little used online Forum (find it via our website at brastro.org) if you'd like to engage in discussion at your own pace.

Whichever you choose, the important thing is that you try and DO IT. We all have demands on our time and sometimes it can be hard to find the time for our own interests. Part of the reason for this club's existence is to help you find ways to indulge this interest. If you've got a particular interest in some astronomical field, let us know. It would likely be of interest to the rest of us and maybe we can focus some of our programs in that direction.

We've already heard from some members that are interested in doing some group observing sessions and we're working out ways to keep everyone informed on those. In the meantime, keep finding ways to indulge your passion for astronomy even if it's in the smallest of increments.

I hope to see you at our next meeting on Monday, March 9th at 7pm at the Highland Road Park Observatory. That's one great way to keep the ball rolling!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

President

Vice President's Word

Hopefully everyone survived my little talk from the last meeting. I'm happy to say that after encouraging everyone to go look at and record the sun, the sun actually had the first day with no sun spots on its face in several years earlier this week. My timing is stunning, really.

Coming up this month, we'll try to break that streak by having NASA Solar System Ambassador Amy Northrop come update the club on the Artemis program. Mainly this is because I've been hearing for weeks and weeks from various news sources that people just don't seem as interested in Artemis. But here we are, five years out from putting people back on the moon; where's the hype? Hopefully, Amy can help us get enthused, even if earlier this week we did find out that the rocket is being pulled back into the hangar for a bit more work (which, to be honest, after years of the "move fast and break things" mantra, I'm kind of excited to see them take their time to make sure our astronauts are safe).

Don let us know at the last meeting that our trip to Rockefeller for the year has been nixed due to a housing issue. But, our own local star party at HRPO is still set for the night of the 6th of March, which should be a great time to come bring some equipment out to put it through its paces in a low stress environment, or perhaps just sit around and stargaze from the comfort of our own home observatory. Hopefully, the weather will be nice enough that we won't have to skip that star party as well. Looking a little further down the road, I can say that the New Orleans club will be having their Spring star party at Feliciana Retreat Center from the 13th to the 17th of May. Registration is required and can be found on the Deep South Stargaze forum.

Our own efforts to put together some outings have seen some progress. Speaking with Merrill a few weeks ago, he offered to speak with a few people he knows have places in darker skies to see if they'd be willing to host our club on a long-term basis. In the meantime, our site on the levy is still okay, but as the local town grows, so does the light pollution and I'm increasingly concerned that it won't be useable for long.

After talks with a few people, I think we'll try to set up a Telegram, Whatsapp, or Signal group that can act as a way for members to coordinate outings. I'm still trying to figure out how to set that up, but it looks like we'll just have people come to a meeting and add their name and number to a master invite list to get it started. Hopefully, once we've got a nice group of regular observers, we can start planning places to go further afield—Kisatchie has been mentioned a few times now.

These are the ideas that we've been kicking around, but I invite you all to join the conversation. By asking about the speakers you'd like to see or the kinds of observing events you'd like to attend, we can all chip in to make that happen.

Outreach Report

Hi Everyone,

Things are starting to pick up around here! This past month we had group Outreach activities at Port Hudson Historic Site and our two Sidewalk Astronomy events at Perkins Rowe and Gonzales. Chris and Annette also did programs at Moncus Park and with the C'est La Joie Academy in Lafayette. All told, we interacted with between 300-400 people in February.

Of course, that deserves a big thank you for our volunteers this past month including: Tammy, Chad, Roz, Scott C., Jim, Don, Coy, David, Chris and Annette R. and Ben. We wouldn't be able to do this stuff without this kind of support within the group. As always, we welcome anyone that would like to come out and join the fun. No experience necessary! We'll show you the ropes!!

March is shaping up to be pretty busy, but so far it is evenly spread out across the month (other than our doubling up on Tuesday, March 24th for Sidewalk Astronomy! We'll just divide and conquer!!) Take a look at the list below and let me know if you'd like to volunteer for something. (I also have the sign-up sheet from the meeting last month so I've got those names down.)

We DO have 4 events requested in June, but for the sake of brevity I won't list them in the newsletter yet. I WILL have them listed on a new sign-up sheet that will be at the upcoming meeting.

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Outreach Chairperson



From Port Hudson: Tammy crafts an image of Roz, Ben, Scott, Chad, Annette, and Chris after finishing up with the crowd of over 250 eager and engaged students, teachers, and minders.

Saturday, March 7th

9am-4pm

Rockin' At The Swamp

Bluebonnet Swamp and Nature Center

(Multiple people needed for demos and Solar Observing. Shifts are welcome.)

Friday, March 13th

6pm-8pm

Star Night at St. George School (Siegen Lane)

Telescope viewing

Thursday, March 19th

5pm-7pm

Spring in the Swamp at Glasgow Middle School

(Demo tables, observing if anything will be visible)

Tuesday, March 24th

7pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

Tuesday, March 24th

8pm-9:30pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Ascension Parish Library- Gonzales Branch

Sunday, March 29th

9:30am-5pm

Zippity Zoo Fest at the Baton Rouge Zoo

(Multiple people needed for demos and solar observing. Shifts are welcome.)



From Port Hudson: Top: Chad shares lunar facts and Roz explains the relative scale of the solar system. Middle: Ben helps students see how telescopes work, Scott explains how a sunspot form, and Tammy takes her turn at the H-alpha scope. Bottom, Chris and Annette walk the scale model solar system.



Helping out: Scott and David set up scopes to spot Mercury and Venus at BREC's Mercury elongation event

Secretary's Summary

There were 28 people in attendance at the February meeting.

Scott Cadwallader delivered an informative presentation titled “Working the Sunspotter Observing Program.” By logging and reporting solar observations, members can earn a certificate from the Astronomical League. Scott discussed program requirements, observing tips and basic terminology including the different types of sunspots. He also emphasized making sure you use safe filters and have a safe set-up. For more information, visit:

<https://astroleague.org/sunspotter-observing-program/>

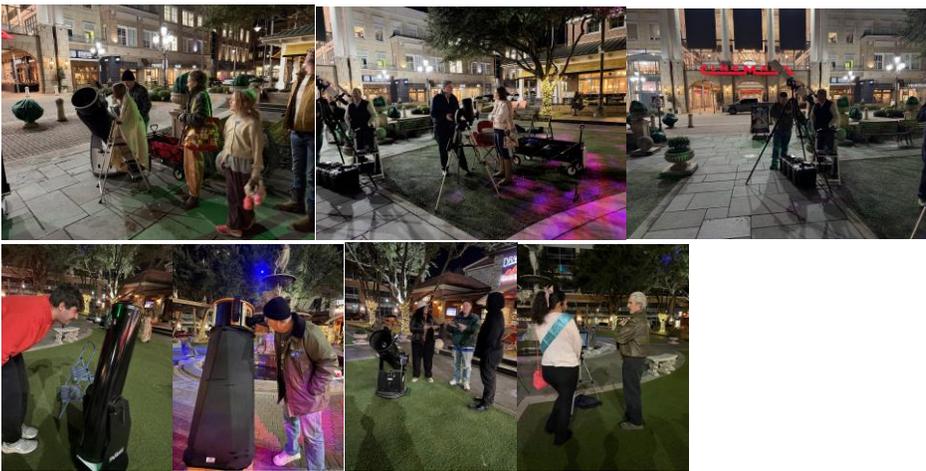
Congratulations go to Coy Wagoner for achieving the Astronomical League’s Bronze Outreach Award, for his contributions promoting astronomy through public education and outreach.

Don Weinell announced that the star party scheduled for 13-14 March at Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge has been cancelled. Lodging at the facility is not available to us at this time, as it is currently being used by Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries new hires.

MOON Night (Members Only Observing Night) is on Friday, March 6th at 7:30pm, following the conclusion of BREC programming. Until at least 10pm, we’ll keep the observatory open (for members) only to bring out their gear or use club gear to do some imaging or observing

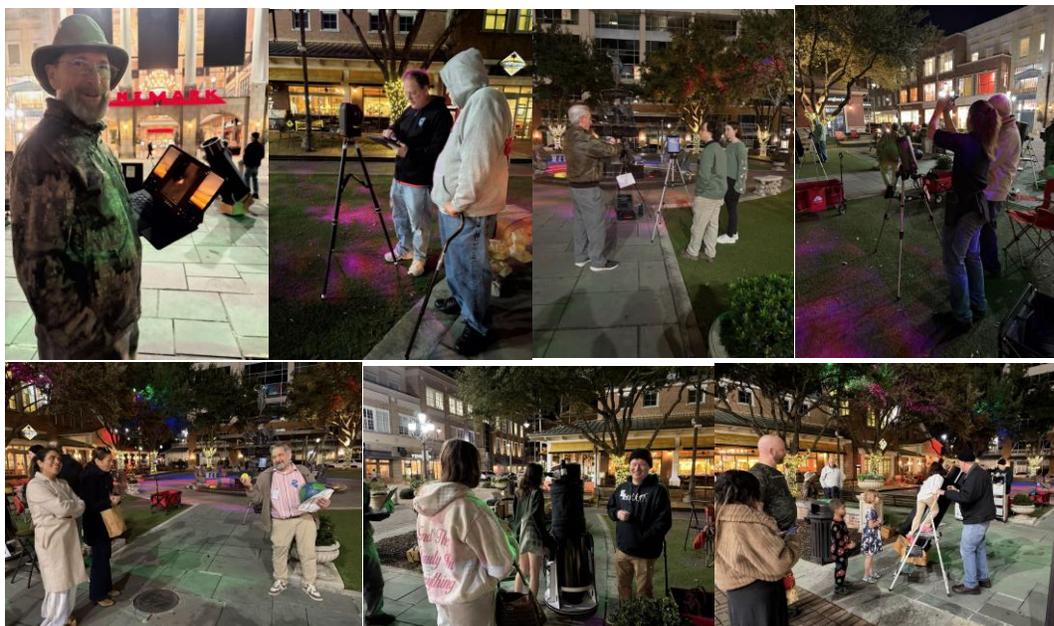
Sign-up sheets were circulated to volunteer for upcoming outreach events, and to place club T-shirt orders.

Three items were raffled off at the end of the meeting. Becca Gravois won the book, “A Star Called the Sun” by George Gamow and also a BRAS drawstring backpack/“mystery bag.” Karen DesRoches won the book, “Cosmology” by Sten Odenwald.



From January's Perkins Row: Top: Coy treats a family to Jupiter, Chad answers Questions, and David checks his charts. Bottom, Roz's scope puts in the effort, Don checks his focus, Ben pantomimes the movement of the planets and Scott grants birthday wishes.

NIGHT VISIONS



From February's Perkins Rowe: Top, Jim, Ben, and Scott find and discuss Seestar targets and Chad helps a young man check out his star map app. Bottom: Steven asks how far away is the moon, while Coy and Don target planets with the big guns for the delight of all. (I have to say, Ben doesn't bring his little 10" out as much as he used to.)



From the February Gonzales Library: Cold but worth it. Don, David, Coy, and Roz had them lined up around the block for a chance to catch a view of Jupiter and the moon.

Observatory Notes

HIGHLAND ROAD PARK OBSERVATORY March 2026 Public Schedule

{A binocular is recommended for all twilight and night viewing.}

TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE

Tuesday 3 March, 2:30am to 6:15am

[HRPO, 2:30am to 5:15am / Burbank Soccer Complex, 3:45am to 6:15am)

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Overnight excitement at HRPO as we open to witness one of nature's most spectacular events! While crossing from Leo into Sextans and then back into Leo, our Moon will enter Earth's shadows. There are a variety of shadings the Moon can become, dependent on the state of Earth's atmosphere. Join us if you can. This will be the last total lunar eclipse seen from Baton Rouge until the summer of 2029!

NOTE: This event occurs on Tuesday morning before sunrise.

EDGE OF NIGHT

Friday 6 March from 5:30pm to 7:30pm

It's not light. It's not dark. It's that special time called twilight and HRPO wants to introduce you to it!

SCIENCE ACADEMY

Saturdays from 10am to 12pm.

for Cadets aged eight to twelve / \$5 per Cadet per week (\$6 if out-of-parish)

advanced registration via WebTrac strongly recommended

[activity #431320] / parents may stay with or leave Cadet

Four Cadet minimum and sixteen Cadets maximum per session.

7 March = "The Gemini Program"

14 March = "The Apollo Program"

21 March = "Astrobiology"

EVENING SKY VIEWING

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Saturdays (7, 21 and 28 March) from 7:30pm to 10pm

Fridays (20 and 27 March) from 8:30pm to 10pm

HRPO houses a 50-cm reflector, a 40-cm reflector and several smaller telescopes to bring the majesty of the night sky to the public. Trained operators, sharing duties via a rotating roster, work throughout the year in shifts. Each operator has a pre-planned list of objects to highlight. However, requests will be taken if there is time and if all present have viewed the previous target.

BATON ROUGE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY MEETINGMonday 9 March from 7pm to 9pmfor ages fourteen and older / no admission feeAMERICAN STEM: A QUARTER-MILLENIAL CELEBRATIONFridays from 5:45pm to 9:45pmfor ages twelve and older / no admission feePart II: 13 March [1826-1876]Part IV: 1 May [1926-1976]Part III: 3 April [1876-1926]Part V: 22 May [1976-2026]Part VI: 12 June [2026-2076]

The great Constitutional Republic experiment has been going strong for 250 years. In addition to incalculable gifts in the areas of human rights and the arts, the United States educational and capitalist and social systems (and our international partnerships) have generated enormous accomplishments in STEM fields.

[This series will follow the Community Discussion format rather than the Lecture format.]

PLUS NIGHT: “Pi in the Sky”Saturday 14 March from 7pm to 10pmfor ages six and older / no admission fee / binocular recommended

During Plus Nights and extra features are available to the public...

*The well-known marshmallow roast takes place at the campfire ring (weather-dependent).

*Seven to ten of HRPO’s collection of over sixty physical science demonstrations will be on hand to perplex and amaze. Which demos will it be?

*An unaided eye sky tour takes place, showing the public major features of the sky for that month.

*Filters are inserted into the viewing mechanisms, to show patrons “hidden” details of the Moon, Mars and Jupiter (when they are available).

*Reveal your age, and be shown any “birth stars” in the sky at that time.

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES7:30pm / for ages twelve and older / no admission fee

20 March = “Wonders of the Spring Sky” BREC Education Curator Amy Northrop will take the audience on a fascinating tour of Baton Rouge’s upcoming spring season. She’ll highlight the celestial gems that will sparkle throughout those three months—gems visitors will be able to see live if they continue to visit HRPO!

27 March = “Regional Milestones” The presentation serves as a turning point in the future of HRPO. As we look at the amazing marks that HRPO and its personnel and volunteers have made in STEM, we remember those who are no longer with us. We will also look forward—toward the new equipment, procedures and programs that are opening the facility to another collection of patrons. The sky belongs to us all.

SOLAR VIEWING

Saturday 28 March from 12pm to 2pm
for ages six and older / no admission fee

Weather permitting, viewing of the Sun's image in four different manners—transferred onto a white surface, directly with optical light, directly in hydrogen-alpha wavelength and directly via Calcium K wavelength—will take place. Protective clothing and sunscreen are recommended.

STEM EXPANSION: “Energy”

Saturday 28 March from 2:30pm to 6:30pm
for ages twelve to sixteen / \$15 each per in-parish registrant; \$18 each per out-of-parish registrant. Advanced registration via WebTrac required [activity #431321].

This program offers advanced topics, topic extensions and all-new games and activities to an older crowd. Certificates will be earned, and a section of archived experiments, some *never* performed on site, take place. There are also giveaways and door prizes.

SPRING SPACE EXPLORATION CAMP

Tuesday 7 April and Wednesday 8 April (8am to 5pm daily)
for ages nine to thirteen / \$55 per EBR-Parish child; \$66 per other-Parish child)
[activity #531880] / limit thirty Explorers / Registration begins 7 February.

All materials are supplied; Explorers will need a sack lunch and drink that does not require refrigeration. Explorers will also need to bring a hat and sunscreen.

INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMY DAY

Saturday 25 April from 3pm to 11pm
for age six and older / no admission fee

The greatest IAD event in the region returns! Once again, expect visitors and interactions involving amateur radio, gems and minerals, Earth nature, the latest in popular STEM publications, and non-visible light investigations of the Universe. A deep-sky tour, a lunar tour, solar viewing and a chemistry demonstration will also take place. Don't forget the Renaissance Sundial! Mark your calendar and don't miss it!

Sky Map



Time centered on 10PM on the 14th of March 2026

Quick Picks—Events for March 2026

- Mon 2 Regulus 0.4°S of [Moon](#)
- Tue 3 Total Lunar Eclipse - Mag: 1.151
- Tue 3 [Full Moon](#)
- Fri 6 Spica 1.8°N of [Moon](#)
- Sat 7 [Mercury](#) in Inferior Conjunction
- Tue 10 Antares 0.7°N of [Moon](#)
- Tue 10 [Moon](#) Apogee at 404,385 km.
- Wed 11 [Last Quarter Moon](#)
- Sun 15 [Mercury](#) 3.4° of [Mars](#)
- Tue 17 [Mercury](#) 2.0°N of [Moon](#)
- Wed 18 [New Moon](#)
- Fri 20 [Venus](#) 4.6°S of [Moon](#)
- Fri 20 Vernal Equinox
- Sun 22 [Neptune](#) in Conjunction with the Sun
- Sun 22 [Moon](#) Perigee at 366,858 km.
- Mon 23 Pleiades 1.1°S of [Moon](#)
- Wed 25 [Saturn](#) in Conjunction with the Sun
- Wed 25 [First Quarter Moon](#)
- Thu 26 [Mars](#) at Perihelion
- Thu 26 [Jupiter](#) 3.9°S of [Moon](#)
- Thu 26 Pollux 3.0°N of [Moon](#)
- Fri 27 Beehive 1.2°S of [Moon](#)
- Sun 29 Regulus 0.4°S of [Moon](#)

From telescopicus.com Events are non-local: check stellarium.com for local times.

Looking up

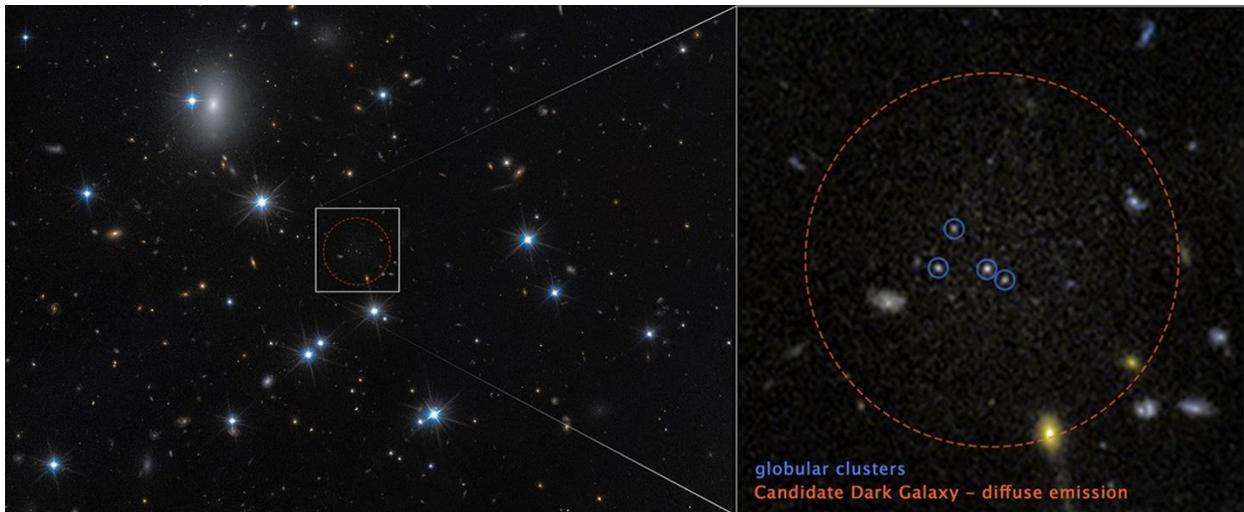
NASA's Hubble Identifies One of Darkest Known Galaxies



NASA Hubble Mission Team

Goddard Space Flight Center

Feb 18, 2026



The low-surface-brightness galaxy CDG-2, within the dashed red circle at right, is dominated by dark matter and contains only a sparse scattering of stars. The full image from NASA's Hubble Space Telescope is at left.

NASA, ESA, Dayi Li (UToronto); Image Processing: Joseph DePasquale (STScI)

In the vast tapestry of the universe, most galaxies shine brightly across cosmic time and space. Yet a rare class of galaxies remains nearly invisible — low-surface-brightness galaxies dominated by dark matter and containing only a sparse scattering of faint stars.

One such elusive object, dubbed CDG-2, may be among the most heavily dark matter-dominated galaxies ever discovered. (Dark matter is an invisible form of matter that does not reflect, emit, or absorb light.) The science paper detailing this finding was published in [The Astrophysical Journal Letters](#).

Detecting such faint galaxies is extraordinarily difficult. Using advanced statistical techniques, David Li of the University of Toronto, Canada, and his team identified 10 previously confirmed low-surface-brightness galaxies and two additional dark galaxy candidates by searching for tight groupings of globular clusters — compact, spherical star groups typically found orbiting normal galaxies. These clusters can signal the presence of a faint, hidden stellar population.

To confirm one of the dark galaxy candidates, astronomers employed a trio of observatories: NASA's [Hubble Space Telescope](#), ESA's (European Space Agency) [Euclid](#) space observatory, and the ground-based [Subaru Telescope](#) in Hawaii. Hubble's high-resolution imaging revealed a close collection of four globular clusters in the Perseus galaxy cluster, 300 million light-years away. Follow-up studies using Hubble, Euclid, and Subaru data then revealed a faint, diffuse glow surrounding the star clusters — strong evidence of an underlying galaxy.

“This is the first galaxy detected solely through its globular cluster population,” said Li. “Under conservative assumptions, the four clusters represent the entire globular cluster population of CDG-2.”

NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center; Lead Producer: Paul Morris

Preliminary analysis suggests CDG-2 has the luminosity of roughly 6 million Sun-like stars, with the globular clusters accounting for 16% of

its visible content. Remarkably, 99% of its mass, which includes both visible matter and dark matter, appears to be dark matter. Much of its normal matter to enable star formation — primarily hydrogen gas — was likely stripped away by gravitational interactions with other galaxies inside the Perseus cluster.

Globular clusters possess immense stellar density and are gravitationally tightly bound. This makes the clusters more resistant to gravitational tidal disruption, and therefore reliable tracers of such ghostly galaxies.

As sky surveys expand with missions like Euclid, NASA's upcoming [Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope](#), and the [Vera C. Rubin Observatory](#), astronomers are increasingly turning to machine learning and statistical methods to sift through vast datasets.

The Hubble Space Telescope has been operating for more than three decades and continues to make ground-breaking discoveries that shape our fundamental understanding of the universe. Hubble is a project of international cooperation between NASA and ESA (European Space Agency). NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, manages the telescope and mission operations. Lockheed Martin Space, based in Denver, also supports mission operations at Goddard. The Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, which is operated by the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy, conducts Hubble science operations for NASA.

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