

Image: Hubble sees a bizarre cosmic rarity: NGC 660

December 11 2013



Credit: Hubble/NASA/European Space Agency

This new Hubble image shows a peculiar galaxy known as NGC 660, located around 45 million light-years away from us.

NGC 660 is classified as a "polar ring galaxy," meaning that it has a belt of gas and stars around its center that it ripped from a near neighbor

during a clash about one billion years ago. The first polar ring galaxy was observed in 1978 and only around a dozen more have been discovered since then, making them something of a cosmic rarity.

Unfortunately, NGC 660's polar ring cannot be seen in this image, but the image has plenty of other features that make it of interest to astronomers – its central bulge is strangely off-kilter and, perhaps more intriguingly, it is thought to harbor exceptionally large amounts of [dark matter](#). In addition, in late 2012 astronomers observed a massive outburst emanating from NGC 660 that was around ten times as bright as a [supernova explosion](#).

This burst was thought to be caused by a massive jet shooting out of the [supermassive black hole](#) at the center of the galaxy.

Provided by NASA

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