Hubble views NGC 3384, a galaxy settling into old age

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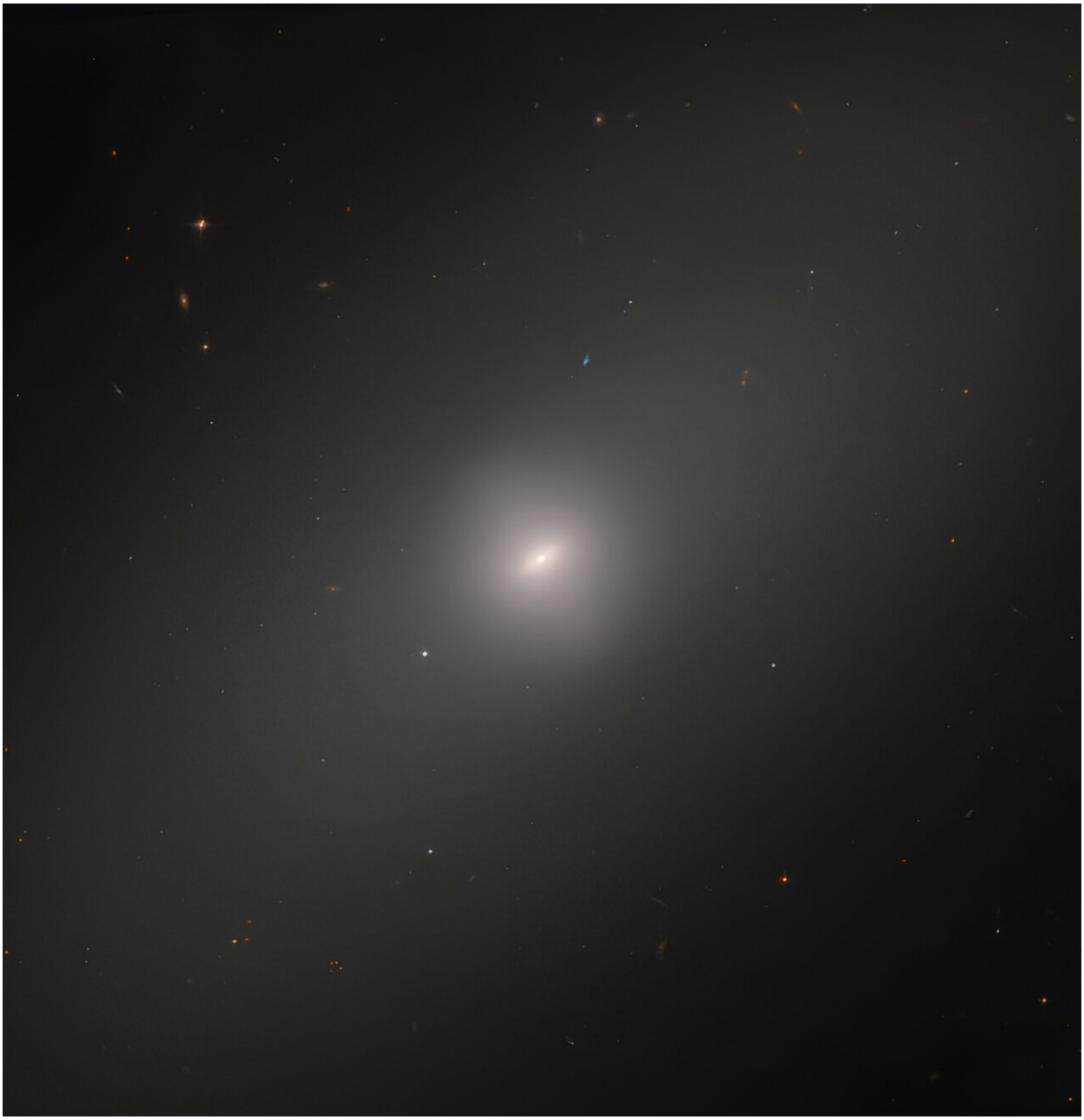

The galaxy NGC 3384 takes center stage in this NASA Hubble Space Telescope image. Credit: ESA/Hubble & NASA/B. Lehmer et al.

NGC 3384, visible in this image, has many of the characteristic features of so-called elliptical galaxies. Such galaxies glow diffusely, are rounded in shape, display few visible features, and rarely show signs of recent star formation. Instead, they are dominated by old, aging, and red-hued stars.

This stands in contrast to the liveliness of spiral galaxies such as our home galaxy, the Milky Way, which possess significant populations of young, blue stars in spiral arms swirling around a bright core.

However, NGC 3384 also displays a hint of disk-like structure towards its center, in the form of a central "bar" of stars. Many spirals also boast such a bar, the Milky Way included; galactic bars are thought to funnel material through and around a galaxy's core, which helps maintain and fuel the activities and processes occurring there.

NGC 3384 is located approximately 35 million light-years away in the constellation Leo (The Lion). This image was taken using the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope's Advanced Camera for Surveys.

Provided by NASA

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