

Study sheds light on dark matter

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British astronomers say they have, for the first time, determined some of the physical characteristics of dark matter.

The researchers utilizing the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in Chile used 23 hours of observing time to explore the strange material that dominates the universe, but which is invisible to current telescope technology because it emits no light or radiation, the BBC reported Monday.

The team from the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge said it has determined how dark matter is "packed," as well as its "temperature," Professor Gerry Gilmore told the BBC.

Scientists estimate dark matter makes up more than 95 percent of all the mass in the universe.

The research team also concluded the Milky Way galaxy is more massive than thought.

"It now looks as though the Milky Way is the biggest galaxy in the local universe, bigger even than Andromeda," said Gilmore. "It was thought until just a few months ago that it was the other way around."

The Cambridge team expects to submit the first of its results to an astrophysics journal within the next few weeks.

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