

Hubble's front row seat when galaxies collide

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This delicate smudge in deep space is far more turbulent than it first appears. Known as IRAS 14348-1447—a name derived in part from that of its discoverer, the Infrared Astronomical Satellite (IRAS for short)—this celestial object is actually a combination of two gas-rich spiral galaxies. This doomed duo approached one another too closely in the past, gravity causing them to affect and tug at each other and slowly, destructively, merge into one.

The image was taken by Hubble's Advanced Camera for Surveys (ACS).

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The huge amount of molecular gas within IRAS 14348-1447 fuels its emission, and undergoes a number of dynamical processes as it interacts and moves around; these very same mechanisms are responsible for IRAS 14348-1447's own whirling and ethereal appearance, creating prominent tails and wisps extending away from the main body of the galaxy.

Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

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