

Image: Hubble fingerprints a galaxy

24 February 2020, by Rob Garner

Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center



Credit: ESA/Hubble & NASA

The NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope is no stranger to spiral galaxies. The telescope has brought us some of the most beautiful images ever taken of our spiral neighbors—and the galaxy known as NGC 4689 is no exception.

However, seen almost face on, NGC 4689 appears less like a majestic spiral and more like a smudged fingerprint on the sky. No matter how good the [image quality](#), there is little contrast between the spiraling arms of stars, gas and dust, and the less dense areas in between. This is because NGC 4689 is something known as an "anemic galaxy," a galaxy that contains only quite small quantities of the raw materials needed to produce stars. This means that [star formation](#) is quelled in NGC 4689, and the pinwheeling, bustling arms are less bright than those belonging to other spiral [galaxies](#).

Despite this subtlety when compared to its brash, spotlight-stealing relatives, NGC 4689 retains an otherworldly charm, its delicately glowing material standing out subtly from the surrounding darkness of space.

APA citation: Image: Hubble fingerprints a galaxy (2020, February 24) retrieved 25 September 2022 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-02-image-hubble-fingerprints-galaxy.html>

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