

Galactic Wreckage in Stephan's Quintet

A clash among members of a famous galaxy quintet reveals an assortment of stars across a wide range of colors and ages.

This Hubble Space Telescope portrait of Stephan's Quintet was one of the first images taken after the May 2009 servicing mission to upgrade the Earth-orbiting observatory.

Stephan's Quintet, as the name implies, is a group of five galaxies. The name, however, is a bit of a misnomer. Studies have shown that the group member at upper left is actually a foreground galaxy about seven times closer to Earth than the rest of the group.

Three of the galaxies have distorted shapes, elongated spiral arms, and long, gaseous tidal tails containing many star clusters, proof of their close encounters. These interactions have sparked a frenzy of star birth in the central pair of galaxies. This drama is being played out against a rich

backdrop of faraway galaxies.

The fifth galaxy at bottom left, is a normal-looking elliptical galaxy that is less affected by the interactions.

**For more information on Tactile Astronomy projects from the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, Maryland, go to the following page at the Web site, Amazing Space:
<http://amazing-space.stsci.edu/tactile-astronomy/>**