



Trio of galaxies mixes it up

The three pictured galaxies — NGC 7173 (middle left), NCG 7174 (middle right) and NGC 7176 (lower right) — are part of the Hickson Compact Group 90, named after astronomer Paul Hickson, who first catalogued these small clusters of galaxies in the 1980s. NGC 7173 and NGC 7176 appear to be smooth, normal elliptical galaxies without much gas and dust. In stark contrast, NGC 7174 is a mangled spiral galaxy, barely clinging to independent existence as it is ripped apart by its close neighbours. The strong tidal interaction surging through the galaxies has dragged a significant number of stars away from their home galaxies. These stars are now spread out, forming a tenuous luminous component in the galaxy group.

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