

SPACE SCOOP

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Lions in the Cosmic Zoo

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This beautiful photo was taken with a new telescope called the VST. It shows three galaxies that are known as the Leo Triplet. (Click on the photo to see all three galaxies.) Large telescopes can normally study only one of these galaxies at a time. But the VST can get all three members of the group in a single picture!

It is called the Leo Triplet because the galaxies are found in the same region of the night sky as the collection of stars that make up the constellation called Leo.

Constellations are pictures in the night sky of objects, animals and humans that are made by joining up stars like a connect the dots puzzle! The word 'Leo' is from an old language and it means 'Lion', so this constellation is supposed to look like a lion. But many of the pictures don't really look much like what they are meant to show and they take a lot of imagination!

You might already know the names of some star constellations, such as Leo, Virgo and Pisces, from horoscopes in magazines and newspapers. These constellations are called zodiac constellations.

Using these zodiac constellations to predict people's futures is called astrology. However, every astronomer knows that this is nonsense, as zodiac constellations don't have any effect on people's lives!

It is common for people to mix up the words 'astronomy' and 'astrology', but they are very different. Astronomy is a science, but astrology is not!

▲ COOL FACT!

Although there are actually 13 zodiac constellations, astrologers ignore the constellation called Ophiuchus and say that there are only 12 zodiac constellations!