



Musket Ball

A composite image of the 700 million year old “Musket Ball” cluster shows how hot gas has been wrenched apart from dark matter in a collision between clusters containing thousands of galaxies. This separation occurs because dark matter, unlike the particles of hot gas, is essentially frictionless. It has been observed in a few other clusters and is the most direct proof yet of the existence of dark matter. Chandra detects the normal matter as hot gas (red-purple), while optical emission from several telescopes reveals the presence of dark matter through the effect of gravitational lensing (blue). Hubble optical data also show galaxies which appear yellow and white.

December 2013

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