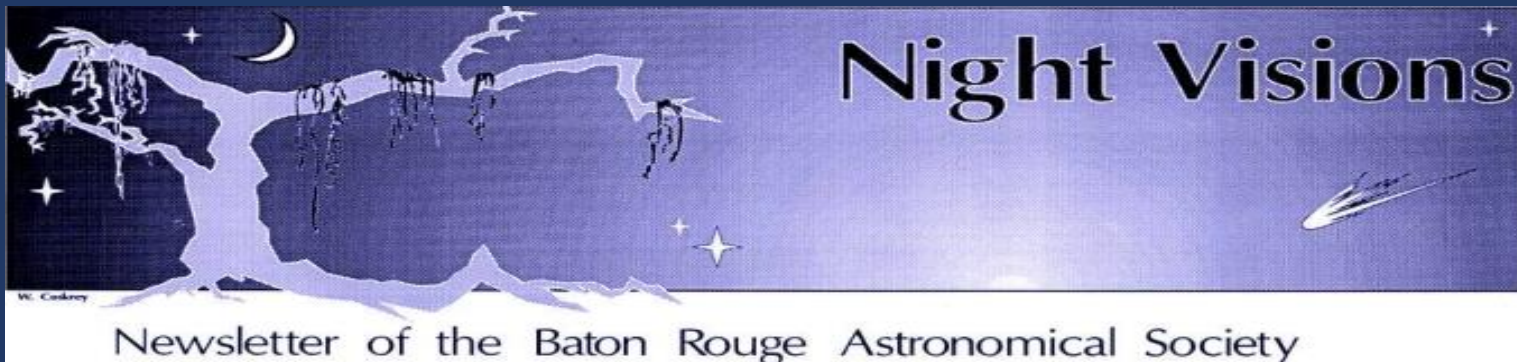




Meetings at Highland Road Park Observatory and online through YouTube

October 2026

Calendar:

- 10 October, 5:30PM: Howell Community Park
- 12 October, 7PM: BRAS Meeting at HRPO
- 16 October, 5:30PM: West Baton Rouge Parish Halloween event
- 17 October, 10AM: Maker's Faire at Goodwood Library
- 19 October, 6PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Gonzales Library (main branch)
- 20 October 6PM: Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe
- 22 October, 5PM: Glasgow Middle School Fall Fest
- 24 October:
 - 7PM: Spooky Spectrum at HRPO
 - 8PM: Star Party at Landolt Observatory
- 25 October, 9:30AM: Boo at the Zoo
- 28 October, 7PM: Astronomy on Tap at Pastime Lounge
- 30 October, 9:30AM: Port Hudson School Dayz

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President's Message

Hi Everyone,

It's officially Fall! Darkness falls across the land. The midnight hour is close at hand. Well, it doesn't have to be AS close at hand anymore for us to get outside for some observing. Woohoo!

I caught up recently with Craig, our long-lost founding member now residing near St. Louis, MO. It made me think about legacy. The legacy of people like Craig and Wally; the two people most responsible for the founding of our club 45 years ago. I think Wally would be proud to see how the club is doing these days. We are more active in our outreach than we've ever been. We're picking up new members regularly and many of those members are stepping up with an active interest in the club. Our relationships with other great institutions in the community such as LIGO and the Louisiana Art & Science Museum are strong and growing stronger. Basically, we are no longer Baton Rouge's "best kept secret" and often times when people think astronomy, they think of us.

All of this is possible because of you, our members. You are showing up and you're not shy about getting involved. That involvement can be something as simple as providing feedback about a recent meeting program to spearheading whole projects that provide more opportunities for our members to learn or to use/share their knowledge. (You all know who you are!)

Long story short(ish), Craig is proud of what we've been doing with his legacy, too. He still has some lofty goals for the club, the chief of which would be the addition of another building on the HRPO grounds. (His dream would be a nice building that would serve as the educational wing, but he'd also love to see a roll-off roof building that would be exclusively for use by BRAS members and could house some of our telescopes in a way that would make them much easier to use on a regular basis.)

So, this IS a little pat-on-our-own-back type message, but we're not going to just sit back now. I'm hoping we continue to grow in both membership, and involvement. Keep on sharing your ideas and keep showing up, too. In the field, amateur astronomers can be a bit solitary, but I think we can all see how much fun we can have when we come together, too!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

President



The September Meeting: Members take in a rainbow before things get going and Amy talks about Nancy Grace Roman.

Vice President's Word

At last, we are finally in September. The cooling temps, the longer nights, the feeling that it's okay to go outside again all mean this is the perfect time to dust off the old scope and get back out there under the stars.

This past month saw us doing just that. Even though the night of the meeting got somewhat totally clouded out, we had absolutely perfect weather for our summer star party at HRPO on the night of the 18th. Thanks to everyone who came out that night to help us ease back into observing from the comfort of our home observatory. And I believe a few of us even got some nice images of Saturn through the 20" scope or some other deep sky objects as a keepsake. I'm a big fan of learning new gear at an urban observatory and we're working on getting some time out there for our members for the Fall and Winter periods too.

Beyond that, we've also got some dark sky trips on our schedule that are coming up fast. The first is the Deep South Stargaze over in Norwood, LA put on by the Pontchartrain Astronomical Society <http://dssg.boards.net/>. This runs from the 10-15 of October, but prices will go up after the 2nd of October so if you want those early-bird prices, time is a ticking (possibly, toc-ed, depending on when you decided to read this).

Shortly thereafter, we'll have a club stargaze set up with a few of the LSU students on the 7th of November (or a weather delayed 6th of November) over at the Whiskey Bay dark site. This is the same group we went with back in April of this year and turned out well, if slightly cloudy. We're trying to set this one up as a bi-annual stargaze, so hopefully the weather plays nice this time. We'll talk more about this at the meeting.

This month's speaker will be Dr. Colin Turley. He's spoken with the club a few times now and is always an engaging and entertaining speaker. He is also the LSU coordinator for these cooperative stargazes so this is the perfect time to ask him any questions.

I'm told the meeting will also see some more of the member side projects like we had last month, and the start of a new program of learning the constellations after the meeting for those interested.

Weather permitting, and it now being dark after the meeting, we encourage members to bring their equipment (or take out some of ours) and engage in some stargazing at HRPO after the meeting for an hour or two. We've been doing this for the past year or two and it has proved fairly popular. It's also a great time to play with the club's Seestar if only to grab some snapshots.

And as a final reminder, the club does have a nice collection of equipment stored at HRPO that we are more than happy to part with: ask us what's available and make us a reasonable offer and a new, gently used scope could be yours on the spot.



Club members enjoying stargazing at our local summer str party at HRPO

Outreach Report

Hi Everyone,

Ready. Set. GO!!

The Fall outreach season is in full swing. We've already had 2 outreach events in the past week. It would have been 3, but the AC was broken in the gymnasium at the Dunham School so they had to postpone their Innovation Night.

As I mentioned in the President's Message, we are no longer the community's best kept secret. We've got requests coming in left and right and many of them are repeat customers. I was pleased to hear from a visitor at our recent Sidewalk Astronomy event that he posted the question, "What is there to do tonight in Baton Rouge?" to the AI of his choice, and the number one recommendation was Sidewalk Astronomy! (It was a great night, too!!)

With how busy this month is about to be, I'm going to get right to the point and say now is a great time to try out volunteering for an event if you've never done so before. As you'll see from the list below, there are plenty of opportunities and we can't be successful without some assistance from our members. We've got some amazingly dedicated regulars and a great cadre of newer volunteers, but we could always use more hands. I would love to get to the point where we have TOO MANY volunteers for an event. (Of course, even if we say we have an event well covered, anyone is welcome to come hang out and help. As the saying goes, the more the merrier!)

So, all that being said, take a look at the list below and let me know (if you haven't already via email or the sign up sheet from the last meeting) if you'd like to come out for any of them. We have good fun and it's a great way to provide some valuable community service!

Clear Skies,

Ben Toman

Outreach Chairperson

Upcoming Events

Saturday, October 10th

5:30pm-9pm

Howell Community Park (BREC)

Event sponsored by the Baton Rouge Police Department

Friday, October 16th

5:30pm-7:30pm

Halloween at the West Baton Rouge Museum

Saturday, October 17th

10am-4pm

Baton Rouge Maker Faire at the Main Library

(Several people needed for shifts throughout the event)

Monday, October 19th

6pm-7:30pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Ascension Parish Library- Gonzales

Tuesday, October 20th

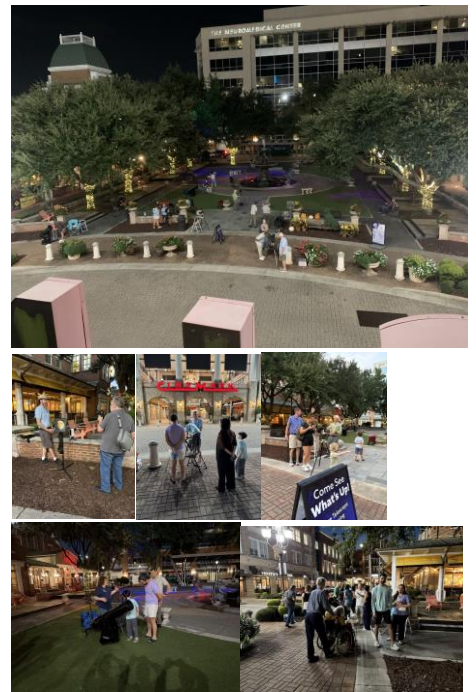
6pm-9pm

Sidewalk Astronomy at Perkins Rowe

Thursday, October 22nd (New**)**

5pm-7pm

Glasgow Middle School Family Fall Fest



Perkins Rowe: Top, Ben takes a snapshot of the field. Middle, Jim poses with his moonshot for a local influencer, Chad helps a child discover the moon, and Scott talks concepts. Bottom, Roz and Ben educate the throngs of patrons wondering what's going on.

Sunday, October 25th

9:30am-4pm

Boo At The Zoo- Baton Rouge Zoo

(Several people needed for shifts throughout the event)

Friday, October 30th (New**)**

9:30am-11:30am

Port Hudson Historic Site School Day



Mid-Autumn Festival: Chad and Scott delight visitors to the festival with educational kits and solar viewing.

Secretary's Summary

There were 23 people in attendance at the September meeting. BRAS Vice President Scott Cadwallader led the meeting as BRAS President Ben Toman was still in Michigan celebrating the Detroit Lions narrow victory over the New Orleans Saints.

Our speaker was NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador and our own Baton Rouge Astronomical Society member Amy Northrop, who shared information about the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope. Amy began by talking about Nancy Grace Roman's background and her contributions to science. The telescope bearing her name was launched into space on August 30th, 2026.

Amy discussed the telescope's structure, orbit and mission. Among the mission's objectives are completing a census of exoplanets, directly imaging an exoplanet, detecting primordial black holes and learning more about dark energy. A giant 300.8-megapixel infrared camera will offer a field of view 100 times larger than equivalent infrared instruments on the Hubble Space Telescope.

Following Amy's presentation, BRAS member Jim Akers provided an update on the BRAS Member Engagement initiative. "Learning the Night Sky" is the subject that received the most requests for more information. As a result, BRAS member John Stevens will begin conducting an Astronomical League Constellation Hunters Class starting in October. Completing The Constellation Hunter Observing Program results in certification and recognition by the Astronomical League. More information will follow.

Jim Akers, John Stevens and Jerry Cloutre demonstrated a device they have been working on to protect smart telescopes from inclement weather. They built a platform that holds up to three smart telescopes and features a "hat" that will automatically cover the telescopes if the device senses moisture (rain). The device can be controlled by a smartphone and will soon be able to send an email to the user notifying them if the cover has been automatically deployed.

Sadly, the club marked the passing of Joey Legoria who passed away on September 4th. Joey and his wife Mary joined BRAS some years ago. Mary teaches at Westdale Heights Academic Magnet where we do outreach programs every year. Joey was a great guy and will be sorely missed.

Scott listed the many outreach events the club has coming up. October is going to be a very busy month. A sign-up sheet to volunteer for the different events was passed around. If you missed signing up, please check Ben's email regarding upcoming events and let him know which events you can help out with.

Some prizes were raffled off at the end of the meeting. Charlie Carson won a Louisiana Space Grant visor and a BRAS string pack/grab bag. Tanya Ayala won the books *Physics of the Future* by Michio Kaku and *The Mind's Eye* by Timothy Ferris. Trey Anding won a Jupiter jigsaw puzzle donated by Chris Raby.

Observatory Notes

{A binocular is recommended for all twilight and night viewing.}

{HRPO is closed 23 October.}

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

7:30pm / for ages twelve and older / no admission fee

2 October = “The Kordylewski Clouds” A strange set of observations have yield proof (?) of an elusive and faint pair of dust conglomerations hiding out at Lagrange points. How were they found? Do they really exist?

30 October = “The Spooky Sampler” The night before Halloween...this lecture slot will be used to highlight a smorgasbord of unsettling stories, images and theories—for our adult audience.

EVENING SKY VIEWING

for ages six and older / no admission fee

Fridays (2 and 30 October) from 8:30pm to 10pm

Saturdays (10 and 17 October) from 7:30pm to 10pm

HRPO houses a 50-cm reflector, a 40-cm reflector and several smaller telescopes to bring the majesty of the night sky to the public. Trained operators, sharing duties via a rotating roster, work throughout the year in shifts. Each operator has a pre-planned list of objects to highlight. However, requests will be taken if there is time and if all present have viewed the previous target.

SCIENCE ACADEMY

Saturdays from 10am to 12pm.

for Cadets aged eight to twelve / \$5 per Cadet per week (\$6 if out-of-parish)

advanced registration via [WebTrac](#) strongly recommended

[activity #331320] / parents may stay with or leave Cadet

Four Cadet minimum and sixteen Cadets maximum per session.

3 October = “Observatories’ Namesakes”

10 October = “Deep Space Missions’ Namesakes”

17 October = “Gamma Rays, X-Rays and UV”

SATURNIAN OPPOSITION

Saturday 3 October from 9:15pm to 11:15pm

Saturn is rising as the Sun is setting. The Earth and Saturn are now the closest they will be to each other this year! Weather permitting viewing of Saturn will take place.

PASSAGE VIA PLUTO

Friday 9 October from 7pm to 10pm

for ages eight to fifteen / no admission fee

primarily for educators and students, though general public welcome

Our special module for teachers, parents and students is commemorating not only the demotion of the most famous trans-Neptunian object ever discovered but also the arrival of New Horizons to that rocky world. However, the goal remains the same: get youth outside and looking at celestial marvels.

MERCURIAN ELONGATIONSunday 11 October from 5:45pm to 7:15pmfor ages six and older / no admission fee

Periodically, Mercury reaches its greatest angular separation in the sky (elongation) from the Sun. This is the safest way for amateurs to view Mercury. Come join us at the Burbank Soccer Complex! The planet will appear as a “half-Mercury”.

BATON ROUGE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY MEETINGMonday 12 October from 7pm to 9pmfor ages fourteen and older / no admission feeA GALAXY OF GAMESFriday 16 October from 6pm to 9pmFor ages twelve and older / drinks

So nice, we’re doing it twice! This open house will showcase those non-electronic tabletop challenges that incorporate an astronomy or STEM theme!

19TH ANNUAL SPOOKY SPECTRUMSaturday 24 October from 6pm to 10pmfor ages six and older / no admission fee / food and drinks, prices vary

Come visit on this moonlit night—if you dare—as HRPO delves into the eerie side of astronomy, physics and aeronautics. We'll have creepy science demonstrations, some of which we've never used. And don't forget the stories. Strange sky phenomena...extra dimensions...extraterrestrials. Be warned—we want to make you think!

SOLAR VIEWINGSaturday 31 October from 12pm to 2pmfor ages six and older / no admission fee

Weather permitting, viewing of the Sun’s image in four different manners—transferred onto a white surface, directly with optical light, directly in hydrogen-alpha wavelength and directly via Calcium K wavelength—will take place. Protective clothing and sunscreen are recommended.

STEM EXPANSION: “Spooky STEM”Saturday 31 October from 2:30pm to 6:30pm

for ages twelve to sixteen. / \$15 each per in-parish registrant; \$18 each per out-of-parish registrant. Advanced registration via [WebTrac](#) required [activity #331321]. Part I is not a prerequisite.

This program offers advanced topics, topic extensions and all-new games and activities to an older crowd. Certificates will be earned, and a section of archived experiments, some not seen in over fifteen years (and some *never* performed on site) take place. There are also giveaways and door prizes.

HRPO COSTUME CONTESTSaturday 31 October from 6:30pm to 10:30pmfor ages six and older / no admission fee / winners declared at later date

A space study institution open to the public on the creepiest evening of the year? What better time to invite old-timers and newcomers to this second-annual contest that mixes the realistic and fantastical. All family-friendly themes welcome!

Sky Map



Centered on 15 October at 10PM from HRPO.

Quick Picks—Events for October

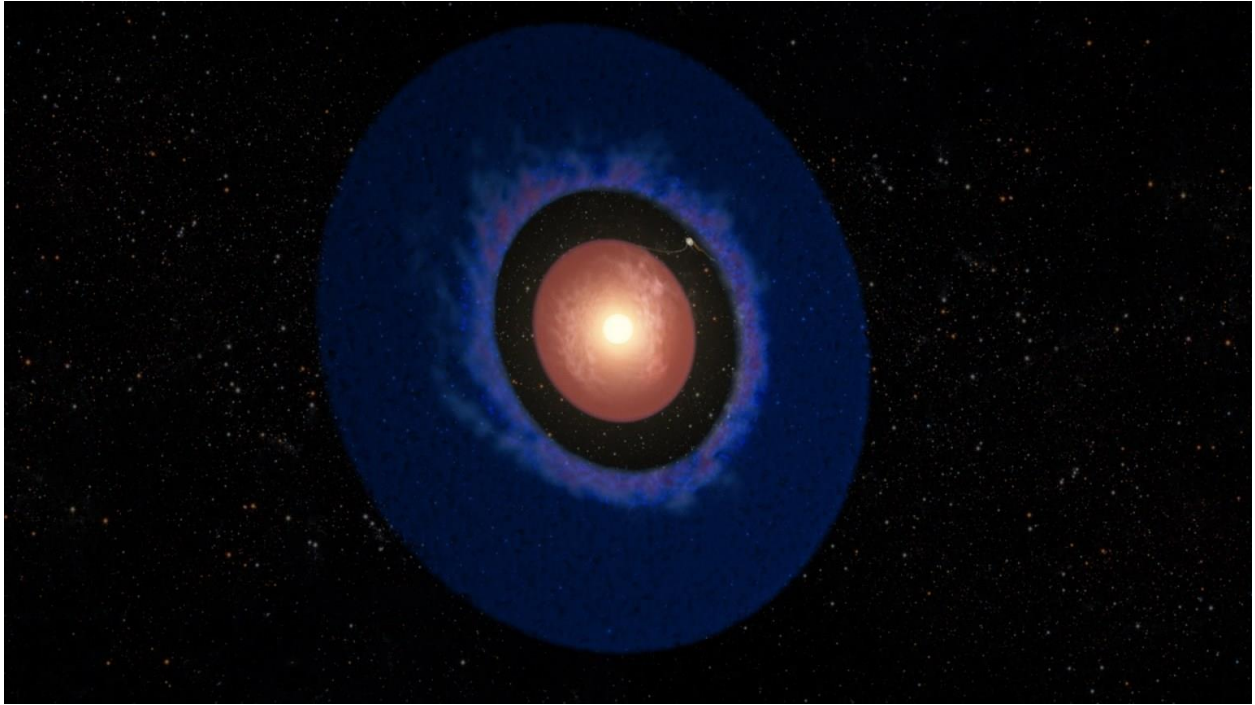
- Thu 1 [Moon](#) Perigee at 369,338 km.
- Sat 3 [Last Quarter Moon](#)
- Sun 4 [Saturn](#) at Opposition
- Sun 4 Pollux 3.8°N of [Moon](#)
- Mon 5 Occultation of [Mars](#) by the Moon
- Mon 5 Beehive 0.4°S of [Moon](#)
- Tue 6 Occultation of [Jupiter](#) by the Moon
- Tue 6 Regulus 0.6°N of [Moon](#)
- Tue 6 [Mercury](#) 5.0° of [Venus](#)
- Sat 10 [New Moon](#)
- Sat 10 [Mars](#) 0.4°S of Beehive
- Sun 11 [Venus](#) 3.1°S of [Moon](#)
- Mon 12 [Mercury](#) at Greatest Eastern Elongation - 25.20°
- Mon 12 [Mercury](#) 2.1°N of [Moon](#)
- Wed 14 Antares 0.4°N of [Moon](#)
- Fri 16 [Moon](#) Apogee at 404,639 km.
- Sun 18 [First Quarter Moon](#)
- Wed 21 Orionid Meteor Shower
- Fri 23 [Venus](#) in Inferior Conjunction
- Sun 25 [Full Moon](#)
- Tue 27 Pleiades 1.0°S of [Moon](#)
- Wed 28 [Moon](#) Perigee at 364,411 km.
- Sat 31 Pollux 4.0°N of [Moon](#)

Events taken from Telescopius.com. Times are non-local: check stellarium.com for your location.

Looking up

Newfound ‘Baby’ Planet Smashes Record for Youngest Known World

Ashley Balzer



An artist's concept of the youngest known exoplanet, Elias 2-24 b.

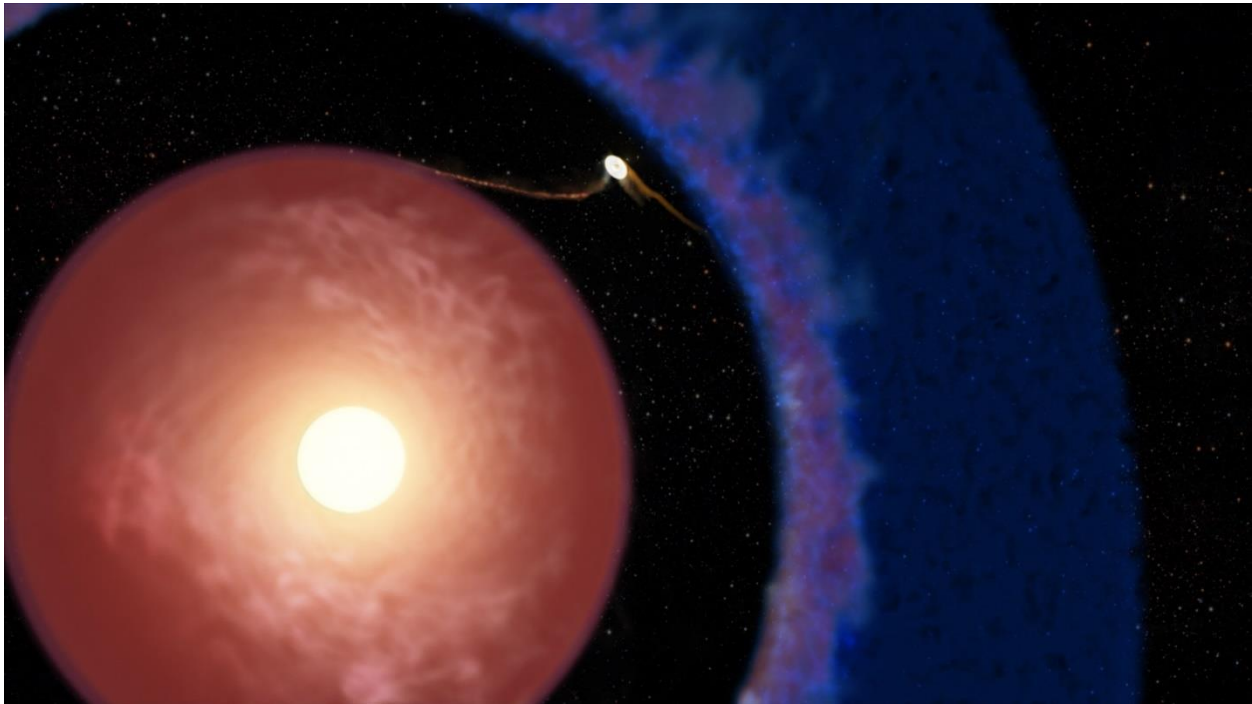
Credits: W. M. Keck Observatory/Adam Makarenko

Astronomers have confirmed a world that's less than a million years old as the youngest known planet, using data from NASA-funded archives. Called Elias 2-24 b, the baby planet is still whirling in its natal disk of dust and gas.

“Our planet-formation models already struggled to explain the previous record holders for the youngest known planet — a four-way tie between two planets orbiting the star PDS 70 and two planets orbiting the star WISPIT 2 — which are all more than 5 million years old,” said Lucas Cieza, a professor at the Instituto de Estudios Astrofísicos in Chile and

co-author of a paper detailing the results. “Elias 2-24 b shows us that even our best planet-formation models are still missing some important processes.”

In a [study](#) published Wednesday in *The Astrophysical Journal Letters*, a team led by Andrea Bernardi, a doctoral candidate at the Universidad Diego Portales in Chile, homed in on archival observations of seven stars that were observed using the [coronagraph](#) at the [W. M. Keck Observatory](#) in Hawaii, which partners with NASA under a cooperative agreement. Each of these stars hosts a debris disk chock-full of dust, gas, and chunks of ice and rock with structures and gaps in the disk hinting that planets may be forming around them.



Artist’s concept depicting Elias 2-24 b, the youngest exoplanet detected to date, still growing within the disk of gas and dust surrounding its young host star. Material from the disk is actively accreting onto the Jupiter-mass planet, which sits within a prominent gap in the disk, supporting the leading theory of giant planet formation.

W. M. Keck Observatory/Adam Makarenko

With the coronagraph blocking light from the host stars, astronomers searched for fainter planets orbiting those stars that could be embedded in the dusty disks. Planets found outside our own solar system are called exoplanets.

“The planets should be found within the gaps, since they are carving them,” Bernardi said. “And that’s exactly where we found Elias 2-24 b.”

The planet orbiting the star Elias 2-24 is about as massive as Jupiter and the star is about 450 light-years from Earth. Studying this system offers a time machine of sorts for scientists to explore what our own planetary system may have been like billions of years ago.

Construction zone

Stars are born in swirling clouds of gas and dust, swaddled in haze. Orbiting planets form from leftover material that clumps up and gradually sculpts a path around the star. But it’s difficult to study an exoplanet’s newborn stage because of all the dust that shrouds them.

Most of the exoplanets we’ve discovered so far have been found using transits, which happen when a planet passes in front of its star and temporarily dims the amount of light we receive.

Those transits are hard to spot when the planets are still deeply buried in dust or orbiting far from the star. That’s why an overwhelming majority of the 6,000 currently confirmed exoplanets are billions of years old and very close to their stars. Current planet-formation models rely on a combination of complex theories and simulations, along with observations of young stars with disks where the presence of planets cannot yet be detected. Finding and studying more baby planets like Elias 2-24 b will help astronomers refine those models.

“The galaxy churns out new stars and planets continuously, so there are many in every stage of evolution,” Cieza said. “That means we can see the entire process in theory, but there is a large gap in what most telescopes can detect. We are mostly blind to these baby planets right now.”

Connecting dots

The confirmation using Keck data solves a mystery that has puzzled astronomers for a decade. About a decade ago, observations from ALMA (Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array) in Chile showed a gap in the young star's dusty disk. The European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in Chile then detected a faint point of light sitting in that gap.

Astronomers debated whether it could be a planet; according to planet formation theories, such gaps appear too early and too far from their stars for planets to have formed. Current models predict that it takes about 5 million years to form a Jupiter-size planet at Jupiter's distance from the Sun (which is just over five times larger than the distance of Earth to the Sun), and even longer farther out. Yet the glowing dot they spotted was 55 times farther from its star than Earth is from the Sun and already behaving like a forming planet.

So Bernardi's team searched the Keck Observatory Archive, a NASA-funded partnership between Keck Observatory and the NASA Exoplanet Science Institute at Caltech/IPAC, for the same little point of light again and found it in observations from 2018 and 2020. They stitched the observations together to analyze its motion over time and found that it behaved more like a planet than an imaging defect or background star, ultimately confirming it as Elias 2-24 b.

"We usually hear about telescopes working separately, but this confirmation was possible only by using multiple telescopes together," Bernardi said. "Elias 2-24 b is at the limit of what current telescopes can detect, but with new instruments like NASA's Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, such detections should become easier."

Roman, which just launched Aug. 30, is equipped with an even more

powerful coronagraph and is capable of spotting planets that are much harder for other telescopes to see. By employing the same technique, Roman could find planets in much smaller orbits, including true Jupiter analogs that are currently impossible to see through the glare. Elias 2-24 b is about 10 times farther out from its host star.

“This is just the beginning of a new era of discovery,” Cieza said. “It’s incredible that with modern technology, we are actually able to see planet formation in action, and Roman will take planet hunting to the next level.”

To learn more about NASA’s exploration of exoplanets, visit:

<https://nasa.gov/exoplanets>

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