

Show Features Images from Celestial Time Machine

Written by Jeff Ignatius

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The Hubble Space Telescope is more than just an instrument to record pictures and data from outer space. In the words of cosmologist Richard G. Kron, it's "like a time machine." The Hubble Space Telescope is more than just an instrument to record pictures and data from outer space. In the words of cosmologist Richard G. Kron, it's "like a time machine."

Hubble is recording light that's just reaching the telescope, but that light left its source a long time ago. When you see a heavenly body from the Hubble telescope, "you're seeing it billions of years ago," said Kron, a professor at the University of Chicago and director of the Yerkes Observatory.

Visitors to the Family Museum of Arts & Science in Bettendorf can get an up-close look at the marvels the telescope has revealed in a traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibit opening on Saturday, February 24. Kron will be on-hand all day for the opening to discuss the telescope.

The exhibit, along with the companion display Women & Flight, runs through May 6. Hubble Space Telescope: New Views of the Universe features a one-fifth-scale model of the telescope, large images from Hubble, a video presentation on its discoveries, and various activities.

Hubble was launched in 1990 and allows researchers to see deeper into space than ever before possible. It also provides better images than land-based telescopes because it can see ultraviolet light and doesn't need to contend with the blurring effect of the Earth's atmosphere.

One of the most useful tools is Hubble's "deep field" capability that captures objects both near and far in the same image. This allows scientists to compare groups of far-away galaxies to similar groupings that might be in different stages of development. "The Hubble telescope allows us to play this game of evolution to an even greater extent," Kron said. In other words, the telescope gives scientists the ability to discover more about how galaxies develop.

Using Hubble with a telescope in Hawaii gives researchers "a comprehensive view of what was going on billions of years ago," Kron said.