

SPACE SCOOP

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE UNIVERSE



The Real Space Chimps

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If you're lucky enough to live in a part of the world where you hardly ever see clouds in the sky, don't worry. You can look at clouds beyond our atmosphere instead – in space!

Cosmic clouds are called nebulae (just one is a 'nebula') and they are quite different from those on Earth. For one thing, nebulae are made up of cosmic dust and gas; mainly of gases called hydrogen and helium. They can also stretch out to hundreds of lights years across – which is billions and billions of kilometres!

Like the clouds we see floating across our skies, nebulae come in many different shapes and sizes. The colourful plumes of gas and bright young stars in this picture make up part of the Monkey Head Nebula.

The Monkey Head Nebula is a type of cosmic cloud known as an 'emission' nebula. The gas in these nebulae is remarkably hot because of the fiery newborn stars that zap their surroundings with sizzling rays of hot particles with lots of energy. This is similar to how sunlight warms our planet, but much, much hotter!

Emission nebulae usually glow red or pink, this is because they're filled with lots of hydrogen gas. The Monkey Head Nebula isn't pink in this picture because it was taken by a special kind of telescopes that collects infrared light. This is invisible to human eyes so astronomers represent this light with different colours just so we can see it.

You can see what the Monkey Head Nebula would look like to our eyes in the second image – and it's very pink!

▲ COOL FACT!

You might have seen the movie Space Chimps, but did you know there have been real monkeys in space? Long before the first human cosmonaut, animals were sent into outer space. The first monkey went to space in 1949, and since then lots of animals have been beyond this world – cats, dogs, rabbits, turtles, jellyfish, spiders, frogs, and more!