

SPACE SCOOP
NEWS FROM ACROSS THE UNIVERSE



A Cosmic Dinosaur Egg Ready to Hatch

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Globular clusters are the dinosaurs of the space. They are huge, ball-shaped groups of thousands and thousands of stars. They look something like a cosmic disco ball. And like dinosaurs, globular clusters are very large and were born a long, long time ago. Some globular clusters are almost as old as the Universe itself!

Surprisingly, astronomers have found a globular cluster being made in a pair of colliding galaxies. It's like finding a dinosaur egg in your backyard, ready to hatch!

A globular cluster can only form from the largest and densest gas cloud. When the universe was young, huge gas clouds were pretty common. That's why all globular clusters were born billions of years ago.

But a huge gas cloud has been discovered in a merging galaxy (that's two colliding galaxies that crashed and are combining into one single galaxy.) One massive blob of gas inside this cloud is called the Firecracker, you can see it in this picture.

The Firecracker appears to be big enough to create an entire new globular cluster in the future. It contains enough material to make fifty million stars like our Sun! But no new stars have yet been born in the cloud. It's like a 'cosmic egg', ready to hatch.

Observing the formation of a globular cluster would be a bit like witnessing the birth of a Tyrannosaurus rex – something you would only expect to happen in the very distant past. Seeing it happen right now will teach astronomers a lot about things that occurred in the Universe long, long ago.

▲ COOL FACT!

The Antennae Galaxies have been colliding for around 300 million years!