



NGC 6872

Astronomers think that supermassive black holes exist at the center of most galaxies and that they are apparently inextricably linked in their evolution, including the two seen here. This composite image of a collision between two galaxies contains X-rays from Chandra (purple), infrared data from Spitzer (red), and optical data from the Very Large Telescope (red, green and blue.) As these two galaxies merge, IC 4970, the small galaxy at the top of the image, is feeding its supermassive black hole by drawing cold gas from its partner galaxy, the spiral NGC 6872. This system and others like it are studied to understand how rapidly growing black holes are affected by their galactic environment.

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