

**Across the Cosmos May 2025:
Celebrating Three Decades of *Astronomy Picture of the Day***

Amidst all the present uncertainties, I've been somewhat at a loss for time and things to write about. I figure we could all use something uplifting, so this month I wanted to highlight a repository for diverse astronomical images that has wowed audiences for three decades. Since June 1995, NASA has maintained the *Astronomy Picture of the Day*¹ (APOD) website featuring a different astronomical image daily. Each image is accompanied by an explanation written by an astronomer. The site has many mirror websites around the world.² The discovery by citizen scientists of star-forming regions named “yellowballs,” which enabled ongoing research by myself and my colleagues, was featured as an APOD image about ten years ago.³

If you could use a source of inspiration, I encourage you to search the archive⁴ for subjects and images that appeal to you – perhaps you can find something appropriate for adult or youth education. The APOD on May 2 displayed an amazing JWST image of a young star cluster in the Small Magellanic Cloud (SMC), a galaxy more than 200,000 light years away.⁵ To put this in context, the light we see in this image was emitted about the time homo sapiens appeared on Earth. The level of detail is remarkable! The small finger-like projections you can see are akin to the famous “Pillars of Creation” we see in many star-forming regions in our own Milky Way Galaxy. These features are sculpted by winds and radiation from luminous young stars. If you search for “Pillars of Creation,” you'll see they have been featured in about 27 APODs through the years, including the breath-taking Hubble and JWST composite of the pillars in the Eagle Nebula (at a distance of about 7000 light years) featured in October 2024.⁶

Until next month,

Grace

Grace Wolf-Chase (she/her/hers)
Senior Scientist; Senior Education & Communication Specialist
Planetary Science Institute
gwolfchase@gmail.com
<https://www.psi.edu/staff/profile/grace-wolf-chase/>
Vice President, Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science
([CASIRAS](#))

¹ <https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>

² https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/lib/about_apod.html

³ <https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap150131.html>

⁴ <https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/archivepix.html>

⁵ <https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap250502.html>

⁶ <https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap241022.html>