A Galaxy-Scale Fountain Powered by a Supermassive Black Hole

• The optical nebula traces the warm envelopes of many cold molecular clouds embedded in the hot X-ray atmosphere.

• The molecular clouds show evidence for inflow toward the central supermassive black hole (SMBH), outflow along jets launched by the SMBH, and uplift by buoyant hot bubbles.

• The emerging picture is one of a galactic-size fountain, wherein gas clouds rise and then fall back toward the black hole.

• When the clouds reach the center of the galaxy, they stimulate another outburst from the central black hole as part of an ongoing cycle with a time scale ~100 Myr.

Caption: Multiwavelength image of the Brightest Cluster Galaxy in Abell 2597 showing data from NASA’s Chandra X-ray Observatory in purple, ESO’s Very Large Telescope (optical) in red, and the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array in yellow.

Distance estimate: 1.1 billion light years (redshift z=0.0821)

Scale: Image is about 15 arcmin (about 75,000 light years) across.


Instrument: ACIS


CXC Operated for NASA by the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory

December 2018