

# SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

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**On the Cover**

It's warped! The Milky Way galaxy, often depicted as a flat disk containing a spiral pattern of stars and gas, actually has a notable twist. The warp baffled astronomers until they realized that dark matter might form clumps and wrest the galactic disk into this shape. Dark matter also makes sense of other puzzles of our cosmic neighborhood.

Image by *Kenn Brown, Mondolithic Studios.*