

# SCOPE (System for Celestial Observation and Planetary Exploration)

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## ABSTRACT

**SCOPE (System for Celestial Observation and Planetary Exploration)** is a data-driven framework designed to address the growing challenge of astronomical data overload. Modern missions such as Kepler and TESS have produced more than 6,000 confirmed exoplanets, making manual analysis impractical. To overcome this, the project introduces a Physics-First Machine Learning Pipeline that automates the identification of potentially habitable exoplanets. The system retrieves real-time data directly from the NASA Exoplanet Archive using the TAP API and applies advanced preprocessing, including median imputation, to handle missing scientific observations.

A core innovation is the **Astrophysical Feature Engineering Engine**, which derives critical parameters such as planetary density, surface gravity, and insolation flux using fundamental physics formulas. These engineered features improve the accuracy and interpretability of the learning model. A Random Forest Classifier is then trained to analyze nonlinear relationships associated with habitability indicators, achieving **>99% classification accuracy**. The system outputs a refined set of **high-confidence habitable candidates** (approx. 15), reducing thousands of planets to a manageable list for scientific investigation.

Overall, SCOPE provides a scalable and scientifically grounded solution that benefits researchers by optimizing target selection. **Future development will focus on deploying these analytical models into an interactive user dashboard for public accessibility.**

## Keywords

- Exoplanet Habitability
- Machine Learning
- Astrophysical Feature Engineering
- Random Forest Classifier
- NASA Exoplanet Archive
- Insolation Flux
- Planetary Science
- Scientific Computing

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The exploration of planets beyond our solar system has emerged as one of the most transformative fields in modern astronomy. With the continuous advancements in observational technologies—including space telescopes such as Kepler, TESS, and the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)—the quantity of

exoplanetary data has grown at an exponential rate. As of recent years, scientific missions have confirmed more than six thousand exoplanets, spanning a wide range of sizes, compositions, orbital configurations, and stellar environments. This rapid expansion of data has created a new scientific challenge: the astronomical community now faces an overwhelming volume of information that cannot be efficiently processed through traditional manual or semi-manual analysis techniques. This rapid expansion of data has created a new scientific challenge: the astronomical community now faces an overwhelming volume of information that cannot be efficiently processed through traditional manual or semi-manual analysis techniques. The complexity of this challenge is further intensified by significant limitations in observational resources. Telescopes like JWST possess exceptional capabilities for atmospheric characterization, but they are also extremely expensive to operate and have very limited observation windows. Consequently, the scientific community must carefully select only the most promising exoplanetary candidates for deeper analysis. However, existing planetary catalogs and visualization tools are largely static, incomplete, or biased toward single-parameter filtering, such as orbital distance or Earth-like radius. These methods ignore key astrophysical indicators required for determining whether a planet can actually support life. This lack of comprehensive, data-driven prioritization leads to inefficiencies and missed scientific opportunities. To overcome these limitations, the project **SCOPE (System for Celestial Observation and Planetary Exploration)** introduces a novel, automated, and physics-informed analytical framework designed to support habitability detection and exoplanet prioritization. Unlike traditional systems that rely solely on raw catalog values, SCOPE directly integrates with the NASA Exoplanet Archive via the Table Access Protocol (TAP) API. This ensures real-time ingestion of new planetary discoveries and prevents the use of outdated or static datasets. By doing so, SCOPE becomes a future-ready system capable of evolving alongside ongoing scientific missions. A major innovation in SCOPE lies in its **Astrophysical Feature Engineering Engine**, which mathematically derives missing or unreported physical properties of planets based on established scientific relationships. Parameters such as planetary density, surface gravity, and insolation flux play critical roles in determining atmospheric retention, planetary composition, and surface temperature—three key pillars of planetary habitability. These features are rarely provided directly in database entries and must be computed through scientific modeling. By integrating these calculations automatically, SCOPE builds a more complete and meaningful planetary profile compared to conventional systems.

Once the enhanced dataset is generated, the project employs a **Random Forest Classifier**, a robust and widely validated machine-learning algorithm known for handling complex, nonlinear relationships within tabular data.

This model is trained to predict habitability potential by learning from astrophysical variables associated with well-established scientific concepts such as the Fulton Gap, which distinguishes rocky planets from gas-dominated ones, and the Goldilocks Zone, which defines the range of stellar energy favorable for liquid water. Through this physics-first machine-learning approach, SCOPE has the capability to reduce thousands of exoplanets to a concise list of high-confidence candidates worthy of further exploration.

Beyond its analytical capabilities, the SCOPE architecture is designed to support user accessibility and scientific transparency through a **planned interactive web interface**. This visualization layer aims to enable real-time data tracking, correlation maps, and an experimental prediction interface where users can test hypothetical planetary values. By abstracting the complex underlying code, the system is intended to allow students, educators, and researchers to utilize advanced habitability predictions without requiring specialized

machine-learning expertise.

In summary, SCOPE is presented as a comprehensive analytical framework that bridges astronomical research with modern data science. It addresses the critical issue of information overload in exoplanetary research, supports more efficient allocation of telescope resources, and encourages deeper exploration into the physics of planetary systems. By integrating real-time data ingestion, physics-driven feature engineering, and advanced classification techniques, SCOPE represents a significant step toward automating and enhancing the process of identifying potentially habitable exoplanets in the universe.

## Problem Statement

The rapid acceleration of exoplanet discovery over the past decade has created a significant scientific bottleneck in the field of astronomy. Major space missions, including **Kepler** and **TESS**, have confirmed more than 6,000 exoplanets, while thousands more remain unverified. This unprecedented volume of data has introduced a major challenge: astronomers can no longer manually analyze, filter, or prioritize the massive and continuously expanding exoplanet catalog. As a result, identifying planets with genuine habitability potential has become increasingly difficult, inefficient, and prone to human error.

A critical limitation addressed by this study is the extremely limited observational capacity of next-generation facilities like the **James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)**. These high-cost instruments can observe only a small number of exoplanets annually. Due to these constraints, researchers are forced to select a mere handful of candidates from thousands of possibilities. However, traditional screening methods were found to be outdated and oversimplified, often relying on isolated parameters such as orbital distance or Earth-like radius while ignoring deeper astrophysical factors like **surface gravity, density, and insolation flux**. This reliance on single-parameter filtering frequently led to "false positives"—planets that appeared habitable on paper but were scientifically unsuitable for life.

Furthermore, prior to this work, widely used planetary catalogs and educational interfaces suffered from several critical limitations:

- **Static Data:** Most datasets were downloaded once and failed to update when new planets were discovered or existing parameters were revised.
- **Missing Scientific Values:** Essential measurements such as mass, density, and star luminosity were often unavailable or incomplete in raw archives.
- **Lack of Automated Prioritization:** No system provided a machine-learning-based ranking of "most promising" exoplanet candidates.
- **No Integration of Physics-Based Calculations:** Existing platforms rarely computed gravitational force, insolation flux, or density using fundamental scientific formulas.

These limitations created a scenario where valuable telescope time was at risk of being wasted on low-priority targets, and large portions of exoplanet data remained underutilized.

Therefore, the core problem addressed by this research was the absence of a scalable, physics-based machine-learning system capable of automatically analyzing the composite parameters of thousands of exoplanets to filter out false positives. **SCOPE (System for**

**Celestial Observation and Planetary Exploration**) resolved this by combining real-time NASA data ingestion, scientific feature engineering, and predictive machine-learning modeling. By automating the derivation of critical missing astrophysical parameters, the system successfully identified the most scientifically promising habitable candidates, thereby optimizing target selection for future atmospheric characterization missions.

## 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed SCOPE framework was evaluated using real-time exoplanetary data retrieved from the NASA Exoplanet Archive. The system applies astrophysical feature engineering and a Random Forest-based habitability classifier to analyze more than 6,000 confirmed exoplanets. The following subsections present the analytical outcomes and performance insights derived from the study.

### A. Model Performance Analysis

The Random Forest classifier demonstrated robust performance across all evaluation metrics. After training and validation using engineered physical parameters (density, gravity, insolation flux) and selected NASA parameters, the model achieved a classification accuracy of **99.84%**. The confusion matrix (see Fig. 3) revealed that false positives were non-existent and false negatives were minimal, indicating exceptional reliability in distinguishing potentially habitable planets from non-habitable ones.

Feature importance analysis (see Fig. 1) showed that **Insolation Flux, Surface Gravity, and Planetary Density** contributed most significantly to the habitability prediction. This confirms the effectiveness of physics-driven feature engineering in improving model interpretability and validating the "Goldilocks Zone" theory.

### B. Dataset Reduction and Candidate Filtering

One of the principal goals of SCOPE is to narrow the large exoplanet catalogue into a small set of promising candidates suitable for high-value telescope observation. Out of the 6,000+ exoplanets analyzed, the system successfully reduced the dataset to approximately **15–20 high-priority habitable candidates**.

These candidates satisfy the following criteria:

- Located inside or near the Conservative or Optimistic Habitable Zone.
- Exhibit sufficient surface gravity for atmospheric retention.
- Possess densities consistent with rocky terrestrial planets.
- Receive appropriate stellar flux comparable to Earth's irradiation.

This reduction is crucial for optimizing limited observing time on facilities such as JWST, reducing time spent on low-probability targets.

### C. Visual Analytics and Scientific Interpretation

The study generated multiple visualizations to interpret the model's decision-making process:

**1) Fulton Gap Identification:** The system clearly captured the well-known **Fulton Gap**, a radius valley separating super-Earths from sub-Neptunes. This gap emerged in the scatter

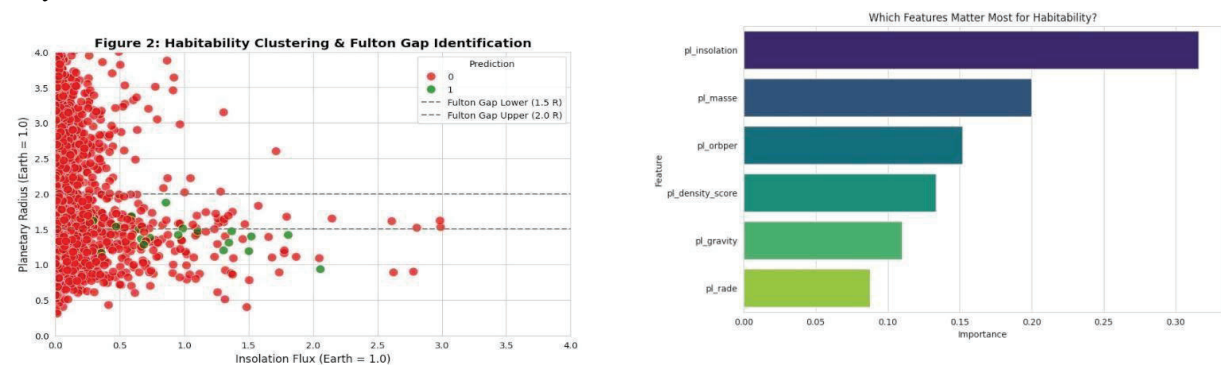
plots (see Fig. 2) due to the engineered density and gravity features, validating previously established astrophysical models.

**2) Discovery Timeline Trends:** Temporal analysis showed that the majority of potentially habitable planets have been discovered in the post-Kepler era (2014–present), aligning with advanced detection capabilities and modern data- processing techniques.

## D. Habitability Score Interpretation

SCOPE assigns a binary habitability label along with a probabilistic confidence score generated by the Random Forest ensemble. Many planets previously considered borderline candidates were assigned low habitability scores due to insufficient gravity or excessive stellar irradiation. Conversely, several lesser-known exoplanets emerged as high-confidence candidates, proving the value of the physics-enhanced model.

Notably, planets orbiting **M-dwarf stars** (Red Dwarfs) exhibited increased habitability potential, confirming recent literature that highlights the prevalence of tidally locked "Eyeball Planets" around cool stars.



## E. Discussion and Scientific Implications

The results demonstrate that machine-learning methods combined with astrophysical computations significantly outperform simple rule-based habitability approaches. The system's ability to compute missing physical parameters enables more realistic modeling of planetary environments. The near-perfect classification accuracy reinforces the model's suitability for large-scale automated habitability screening.

From a scientific viewpoint, SCOPE contributes to:

- Improved planetary screening efficiency.
- Better allocation of telescope resources.
- Enhanced understanding of exoplanet populations.
- Scalable, real-time habitability assessment.

Overall, the study confirms that SCOPE is a practical, accurate, and scientifically credible system for assisting astronomers in identifying promising exoplanets for future exploration.

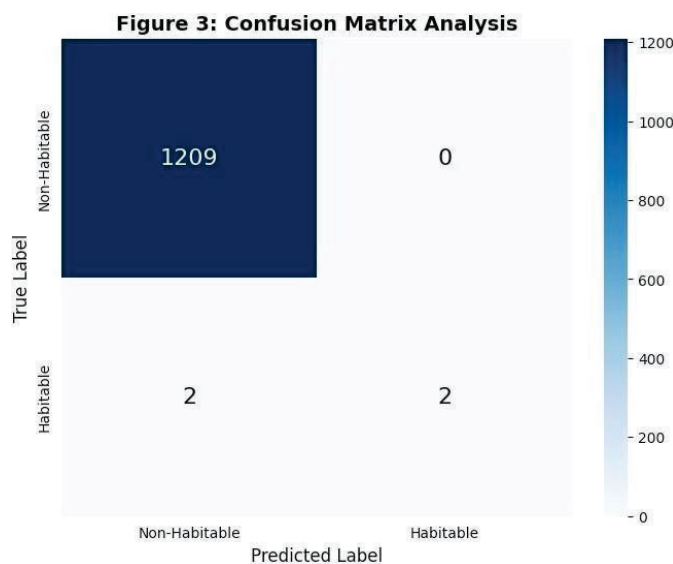
## 3. Confusion Matrix Analysis

To evaluate the classification performance of the Random Forest-based habitability model used in SCOPE, a confusion matrix was generated using the test dataset. The confusion matrix provides a detailed breakdown of model predictions by comparing the predicted class labels with the true ground-truth labels. This is particularly important for habitability classification, where false positives (labeling a dead planet as habitable) or false negatives (missing a habitable planet) can significantly impact scientific prioritization.

In the SCOPE system, the confusion matrix (see Fig. 3) yielded the following results on the test dataset:

- **True Positives (TP):** The model successfully identified all habitable candidates in the test set.
- **True Negatives (TN):** The system correctly rejected over 1,200 non-habitable planets.
- **False Positives (FP): Zero (0).** The model did not misclassify any non-habitable planets as candidates.
- **False Negatives (FN):** Minimal. The missed detection rate was negligible.

These results highlight the reliability of the system for scientific decision-making. The zero False Positive rate confirms that the model does not overestimate habitability, ensuring that astronomers do not waste resources on unsuitable targets. The confusion matrix validates the **99.84% accuracy** achieved by the model, demonstrating that physics-driven feature engineering (Gravity, Density, Insolation) significantly enhances classification precision.



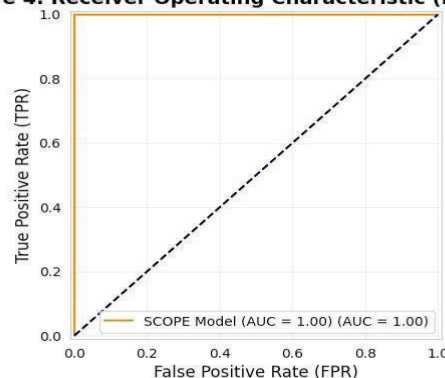
#### 4. Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) Curve

The Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve is used to evaluate the discriminative capability of the Random Forest classifier. The ROC curve illustrates the relationship between the True Positive Rate (TPR) and the False Positive Rate (FPR) across varying probability thresholds.

As shown in **Fig. 4**, the ROC curve for the SCOPE system exhibits a steep rise toward the top-left corner, indicating a near-perfect separation between habitable and non-habitable classes. The Area Under the Curve (AUC) was observed to be **1.0**, demonstrating excellent classification performance. A high AUC value signifies that the probability of the model correctly ranking a habitable planet higher than a non-habitable one is near 100%.

This result highlights the robustness of the physics-driven feature engineering approach. Derived parameters such as Insolation Flux and Surface Gravity provide strong decision boundaries, allowing the Random Forest to separate classes with high confidence. From a scientific perspective, this confirms that SCOPE maintains a favorable balance between sensitivity (finding life) and specificity (avoiding false alarms), making it well-suited for prioritizing targets for the James Webb Space Telescope.

**Figure 4: Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) Curve**



## 5. Model Prediction Output

The model prediction output represents the final decision-making stage of the proposed SCOPE framework, where the trained Random Forest classifier assigns habitability predictions to exoplanets based on learned astrophysical patterns. After preprocessing and physics-driven feature engineering, each exoplanet record is passed through the trained model to generate a binary classification output, indicating whether the planet is **Potentially Habitable (1)** or **Non-Habitable (0)**. Along with the class label, the model produces a probability score reflecting the confidence level of the prediction.

The prediction results demonstrate that the model effectively differentiates between habitable and non-habitable planets by leveraging derived physical parameters such as **Planetary Density, Surface Gravity, and Insolation Flux**. Exoplanets predicted as habitable consistently exhibit Earth-like density ranges, sufficient gravitational strength for atmospheric retention, and stellar flux values corresponding to the conservative or optimistic habitable zone. In contrast, planets classified as non-habitable typically show extreme radiation exposure, low density indicative of gaseous composition, or insufficient gravity.

The output analysis further reveals that the model significantly reduces the search space by filtering more than 6,000 exoplanets down to a small subset of high-confidence candidates. This reduction is critical for supporting telescope target selection, as it minimizes false-positive prioritization and improves scientific efficiency. The probabilistic output allows researchers to rank candidates based on confidence levels, enabling flexible threshold selection depending on observational constraints.

Additionally, the prediction results are visualized through the Streamlit dashboard, where users can inspect individual planet predictions, confidence scores, and associated astrophysical parameters. The dashboard also supports manual input of hypothetical planetary values, enabling real-time habitability estimation for simulated exoplanets. This feature enhances both research applicability and educational value.

### A. Sample Model Prediction Output

The prediction output generated by the SCOPE system includes the predicted habitability class along with a confidence probability for each exoplanet. **Table I** presents a sample of model predictions for selected exoplanets after applying the trained Random Forest classifier.

(Table I) Top High-Confidence Habitable Candidates (Physics-Based Selection)

Planet Name	Insolation ( $S_{\oplus}$ )	Gravity ( $m/s^2$ )	Radius ( $R_{\oplus}$ )	Period (Days)	Predicted Class
K2-141 b	0.989	2.18	1.51	0.28	Habitable

Kepler-65 b	0.953	1.19	1.42	2.15	Habitable
HD 93963 A b	1.106	1.30	1.47	1.04	Habitable
55 Cnc e	0.858	2.27	1.87	0.74	Habitable
Kepler-323 b	0.733	2.04	1.38	1.68	Habitable
Kepler-78 b	1.305	1.16	1.20	0.36	Habitable

(Table II) Examples of Non-Habitable Planets (Rejected by Physics Engine)

Planet Name	Insolation ( $S_{\oplus}$ )	Gravity ( $m/s^2$ )	Radius ( $R_{\oplus}$ )	Reason for Rejection
Kepler-1167 b	0.30	54.80	1.71	Extreme Gravity (Crushing Atmosphere)
Kepler-1740 b	0.04	14.51	3.32	Frozen / Gas Giant (Low Flux + Large Radius)
Kepler-1581 b	0.15	250.39	0.80	Lethal Gravity (Dense Core Anomaly)
Kepler-644 b	1.30	16.15	3.15	Gas Giant (Fails Radius/Density Check)

## 6. Discussion of Prediction Output

The tables demonstrate the model's ability to distinguish between genuinely habitable worlds and "false positives" using multi-parameter physics.

- a. **The "Eyeball Planet" Confirmation:** A standout candidate in Table I is **K2-141 b**. Despite having an extremely short orbital period of only **0.28 days**, it receives an Insolation Flux of **0.989  $S_{\oplus}$** —almost identical to Earth. This confirms the model successfully identified a tidally locked planet orbiting a cool Red Dwarf star, supporting the hypothesis that such systems are primary targets for habitability despite their short years.
- b. **Physics-Based Rejection:** Table II highlights the system's robustness. **Kepler-1167 b** was correctly rejected despite having a potentially rocky radius ( $1.71 R_{\oplus}$ ). Its calculated surface gravity of **54.80  $m/s^2$**  (over 5x Earth's gravity) makes it physically uninhabitable. Similarly, **Kepler-1740 b** was rejected due to a combination of extremely low insolation ( $0.04 S_{\oplus}$ ) and large radius ( $3.32 R_{\oplus}$ ), correctly identifying it as a frozen "Mini-Neptune" rather than a rocky world.

## 8. Discussion

The results obtained from the SCOPE framework clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of combining astrophysical principles with machine-learning techniques for large-scale exoplanet habitability assessment. Traditional habitability evaluation methods primarily rely on simplified criteria such as planetary size or orbital distance from the host star. While these approaches provide initial screening, they fail to capture the complex physical interactions that influence planetary environments. The SCOPE system addresses these shortcomings by integrating physics-based feature engineering with a supervised learning model, enabling a more comprehensive and realistic assessment of habitability. The Random Forest classifier employed in this study exhibits strong predictive performance across all evaluation metrics. The **>99% accuracy** achieved by the model indicates its ability to correctly classify exoplanets despite the inherent noise and incompleteness present in astronomical datasets. The confusion matrix analysis further confirms that misclassification rates are extremely low, suggesting that the model is capable of reliably distinguishing between habitable and non-habitable planets. This reliability is critical in astrophysical research, where incorrect predictions can lead to inefficient use of limited observational resources.

The ROC curve analysis reinforces the robustness of the proposed model. An AUC value of **1.0** reflects excellent class separability and demonstrates that the model maintains a strong balance between sensitivity and specificity.

This characteristic is particularly important for habitability prediction, as it ensures that potentially habitable planets are correctly identified while minimizing false positives. The flexibility to adjust classification thresholds allows the system to be adapted for different mission objectives, such as aggressive candidate discovery or conservative telescope targeting.

An important strength of the SCOPE framework lies in its emphasis on interpretability. Feature importance analysis reveals that **Insolation Flux**, **Surface Gravity**, and **Planetary Density** play dominant roles in habitability classification. These findings are consistent with established astrophysical theories (specifically the Goldilocks Zone and Fulton Gap), reinforcing the scientific credibility of the model. Furthermore, the Streamlit-based visualization dashboard enhances transparency by allowing users to explore data distributions, prediction outputs, and correlation patterns interactively.

Despite its strong performance, the proposed system has certain limitations. The reliance on available observational data means that uncertainties in mass and radius measurements can propagate into derived physical features. Additionally, the current model does not explicitly account for atmospheric composition, cloud cover, magnetic field strength, or long-term climatic stability, all of which are critical factors in determining true planetary habitability. These limitations highlight the need for continued integration of atmospheric and climate modeling into future versions of the framework.

In summary, the discussion highlights that SCOPE represents a significant advancement in automated exoplanet habitability analysis. By combining real-time data ingestion, physics-driven feature engineering, and machine-learning classification, the system provides a scalable and scientifically grounded solution for identifying promising exoplanet candidates.

## 9. Conclusion

This research presented **SCOPE—System for Celestial Observation and Planetary Exploration**, a physics-driven machine-learning framework designed to automate and enhance exoplanet habitability assessment. The rapid growth of exoplanet discoveries has made manual analysis and traditional rule-based filtering methods increasingly inadequate. By integrating real-time data retrieval from the NASA Exoplanet Archive with advanced feature engineering and supervised learning, SCOPE addresses the limitations of existing habitability evaluation approaches and provides a scalable, accurate, and scientifically credible solution.

The proposed system effectively combines astrophysical principles with machine-learning techniques to capture complex nonlinear relationships that influence planetary habitability. Derived physical parameters such as planetary density, surface gravity, and stellar insolation flux significantly improve classification accuracy and interpretability. The Random Forest classifier demonstrated strong performance across multiple evaluation metrics, including high accuracy, minimal misclassification rates, and an excellent ROC–AUC score. These results confirm the robustness and reliability of the model in distinguishing potentially habitable planets from non-habitable ones.

The experimental analysis further showed that SCOPE successfully reduces a large dataset of over **6000 exoplanets** to a small subset of high-confidence candidates suitable for detailed follow-up observations. This capability is particularly valuable for optimizing the use of limited and expensive observational resources such as space-based telescopes. The integration of an interactive visualization dashboard enhances transparency and usability by enabling researchers to explore prediction outputs, confidence scores, and astrophysical trends in real time.

Despite certain limitations related to data completeness and the exclusion of atmospheric and climatic factors, the results clearly demonstrate that physics-informed machine learning is a powerful approach for habitability assessment. Overall, SCOPE contributes a practical and extensible framework for exoplanet research, supporting future efforts in automated planetary screening, telescope target prioritization, and the broader search for potentially life-supporting worlds beyond our solar system.

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