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Star Photometry Utilities

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A collection of functions for astronomical photometry analysis

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Usage:

```
from star_photometry_utils import find_star_center_processed, detect_and_exclude_star_trails
```

Disclaimer:

```
no where in this code do I promise that it works correctly, quickly, or without errors.  
hopefully you find it useful
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```
import numpy as np  
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt  
import pylab  
from scipy.ndimage import uniform_filter
```

```
def find_star_center(image, search_radius=50, box_size=250, min_radius=5):
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    """
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```
        Find the center of the brightest star in an already sky-subtracted image.
```

```
This function locates the star by smoothing the image to find the brightest  
region, then performs intensity-weighted centroiding on the bright pixels.  
It also estimates the star's radius by analyzing the radial brightness profile.
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Parameters

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image : numpy.ndarray
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```
    The sky-subtracted image data (2D array)
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```
search_radius : int, optional
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```
    Radius to define what counts as a "clump" of bright pixels (default: 50)
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```
box_size : int, optional
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```
    Size of box around brightest region to use for centroiding (default: 250)
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```
min_radius : float, optional
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```
    Minimum expected star radius in pixels (default: 5)
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Returns

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```
x_center : float
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```
    X-coordinate of the star center (pixels)
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y_center : float
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```
    Y-coordinate of the star center (pixels)
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```
star_radius : float
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```
    Estimated radius of the star (pixels)
```

Examples

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```
>>> from astropy.io import fits  
>>> image = fits.getdata('processed_star_image.fits')  
>>> x, y, radius = find_star_center_processed(image)  
>>> print(f"Star at ({x:.2f}, {y:.2f}) with radius {radius:.2f} pixels")
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```
# For sky-subtracted images, estimate the noise level from the image edges  
edge_pixels = np.concatenate([  
    image[0, :],      # top edge  
    image[-1, :],     # bottom edge  
    image[:, 0],      # left edge
```

```
        image[:, -1]      # right edge
    ])
sky_noise = np.std(edge_pixels)

# Smooth the image to find clumps
smoothed = uniform_filter(image, size=search_radius)

# Find the brightest clump in the smoothed image
max_idx = np.argmax(smoothed)
y_max, x_max = np.unravel_index(max_idx, smoothed.shape)

# Extract a larger box around the brightest clump
half_box = box_size // 2
y_min = max(0, y_max - half_box)
y_max_box = min(image.shape[0], y_max + half_box)
x_min = max(0, x_max - half_box)
x_max_box = min(image.shape[1], x_max + half_box)

box = image[y_min:y_max_box, x_min:x_max_box]

# Create coordinate grids for the box
y_indices, x_indices = np.mgrid[y_min:y_max_box, x_min:x_max_box]

# First pass: get rough center using bright pixels
threshold_bright = np.percentile(box[box > 0], 90) if np.any(box > 0) else 0
mask_bright = box > threshold_bright

if np.sum(mask_bright) < 10:
    return float(x_max), float(y_max), min_radius

# Calculate intensity-weighted centroid from bright pixels
total_intensity = np.sum(box[mask_bright])
x_center = np.sum(x_indices[mask_bright] * box[mask_bright]) / total_intensity
y_center = np.sum(y_indices[mask_bright] * box[mask_bright]) / total_intensity

# Now create a radial profile to find where star flux drops to noise level
distances = np.sqrt((x_indices - x_center)**2 + (y_indices - y_center)**2)

# Bin the radial profile
max_radius = min(half_box, 100) # Don't go too far out
radial_bins = np.arange(0, max_radius, 1)
radial_profile = []

for r in radial_bins:
    # Get pixels in this radial bin
    mask = (distances >= r) & (distances < r + 1)
    if np.sum(mask) > 0:
        # Use median to be robust against cosmic rays
        radial_profile.append(np.median(box[mask]))
    else:
        radial_profile.append(0)

radial_profile = np.array(radial_profile)

# Find where the radial profile drops to ~3*noise level
# This is where the star signal becomes indistinguishable from noise
noise_threshold = 2 * sky_noise

# Find the first radius where profile drops below noise threshold
# and stays there for at least 3 consecutive bins
star_radius = min_radius
for i in range(len(radial_profile) - 3):
    if np.all(radial_profile[i:i+3] < noise_threshold):
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    star_radius = radial_bins[i]
    break
else:
    # If we never drop to noise, use where we drop to 10% of peak
    peak_value = np.max(radial_profile)
    for i, val in enumerate(radial_profile):
        if val < 0.1 * peak_value:
            star_radius = radial_bins[i]
            break
    else:
        print('fall back L')
        star_radius = max_radius * 0.5 # fallback

# Make sure we have a reasonable minimum
star_radius = max(star_radius, min_radius)

return x_center, y_center, star_radius
```

```
def detect_trails(image_files, positions, photometry, photometry_err,
                  time_offsets, outlier_threshold=4.0, plot=True):
"""
Detect images where the star has trailed using Modified Z-Score (MAD-based).

```

This function identifies telescope tracking errors that cause stars to trail during exposure by detecting significant flux drops compared to the median. It uses the Modified Z-Score method based on Median Absolute Deviation (MAD), which is robust to outliers and only flags values significantly BELOW the median.

Parameters

image_files : list of str

 List of image filenames

positions : list of tuple

 List of (x, y) star positions for each image

photometry : numpy.ndarray

 Measured photometry values in DN/s (1D array)

photometry_err : numpy.ndarray

 Photometry uncertainties in DN/s (1D array)

time_offsets : numpy.ndarray

 Time of each observation in seconds (1D array)

outlier_threshold : float, optional

 Number of modified z-score sigma for outlier detection (default: 4.0)

 Typical values: 3.5-4.5 (lower = more sensitive to trails)

plot : bool, optional

 Whether to plot diagnostic figures (default: True)

Returns

valid_indices : numpy.ndarray

 Indices of images without trails (can be used to filter arrays)

Notes

The Modified Z-Score is calculated as:

$$M_i = 0.6745 * (x_i - \text{median}) / \text{MAD}$$

where MAD is the Median Absolute Deviation of negative deviations.

The factor 0.6745 makes MAD comparable to standard deviation for normal data.

Only images with flux significantly BELOW the median are flagged, as trailing stars spread light over a larger area, reducing measured flux.

Examples

```
>>> # Basic usage
>>> valid_idx = detect_and_exclude_star_trails(
...     filenames, positions, flux, flux_err, times,
...     outlier_threshold=4.0, plot=True
... )
>>> # Filter your data arrays
>>> clean_flux = flux[valid_idx]
>>> clean_times = times[valid_idx]

>>> # More sensitive detection
>>> valid_idx = detect_and_exclude_star_trails(
...     filenames, positions, flux, flux_err, times,
...     outlier_threshold=3.5, plot=False
... )
"""

valid_indices = []
trailed_indices = []

print("=" * 60)
print("STAR TRAIL DETECTION (Modified Z-Score)")
print("=" * 60)
print(f"Threshold: {outlier_threshold} modified z-score (below median only)")

# Calculate median flux
median_flux = np.median(photometry)
deviations = photometry - median_flux

# Only use negative deviations for MAD calculation
negative_devs = deviations[deviations < 0]
mad = np.median(np.abs(negative_devs)) if len(negative_devs) > 0 else np.median(np.abs(deviations))

# Modified z-score: 0.6745 * (x - median) / MAD
# The 0.6745 factor makes MAD comparable to standard deviation for normal data
modified_zscores = 0.6745 * deviations / mad if mad > 0 else np.zeros_like(photometry)

print(f"Median flux: {median_flux:.1f} DN/s")
print(f"MAD (negative deviations): {mad:.1f} DN/s")
print(f"Equivalent sigma: {mad / 0.6745:.1f} DN/s")

# Plot diagnostic figure
if plot:
    fig, (ax1, ax2, ax3) = pylab.subplots(3, 1, figsize=(12, 12))

    # Determine which points are good vs bad
    good_mask = modified_zscores >= -outlier_threshold
    bad_mask = modified_zscores < -outlier_threshold

    # Extract band prefix for labeling
    band_prefix = image_files[0].split('_')[0] if '_' in image_files[0] else 'IMG'

    # Top panel: Light curve with flagged points
    if np.any(good_mask):
        ax1.errorbar(time_offsets[good_mask], photometry[good_mask],
                     photometry_err[good_mask], fmt='o', alpha=0.5,
                     color='blue', label='Valid')
    if np.any(bad_mask):
        ax1.errorbar(time_offsets[bad_mask], photometry[bad_mask],
                     photometry_err[bad_mask], fmt='x', markersize=10,
                     color='red', label='Rejected (trails)', linewidth=2)

    # Add index labels to each point
    for i in range(len(photometry)):
```

```
color = 'red' if bad_mask[i] else 'blue'
ax1.annotate(f'{band_prefix}_{i+1}', (time_offsets[i], photometry[i]),
            textcoords="offset points", xytext=(0,5), ha='center',
            fontsize=7, alpha=0.7, color=color)

ax1.axhline(median_flux, color='purple', linestyle='-', alpha=0.5,
            linewidth=2, label='Median')
ax1.axhline(median_flux - outlier_threshold * mad / 0.6745,
            color='orange', linestyle='--', alpha=0.7, linewidth=2,
            label=f'-{outlier_threshold}\u00d7203 threshold')
ax1.set_ylabel('Flux (DN/s)', fontsize=11)
ax1.set_title('Light Curve and Trail Detection', fontsize=12, fontweight='bold')
ax1.legend(loc='best')
ax1.grid(True, alpha=0.3)

# Middle panel: Modified z-scores
ax2.plot(time_offsets, modified_zscores, 'o', alpha=0.6, color='gray')
ax2.axhline(0, color='purple', linestyle='-', linewidth=2, label='Median (z=0)')
ax2.axhline(-outlier_threshold, color='orange', linestyle='--',
            linewidth=2, label=f'-{outlier_threshold}\u00d7203 threshold')
ax2.fill_between([time_offsets.min(), time_offsets.max()],
                 -outlier_threshold, -5, alpha=0.2, color='red',
                 label='Trail region')

# Highlight rejected points
if np.any(bad_mask):
    ax2.plot(time_offsets[bad_mask], modified_zscores[bad_mask],
             'rx', markersize=10, linewidth=2)

ax2.set_ylabel('Modified Z-Score', fontsize=11)
ax2.set_title('Modified Z-Scores vs Time', fontsize=12)
ax2.legend(loc='best')
ax2.grid(True, alpha=0.3)

# Bottom panel: Distribution with box plot
ax3.boxplot([photometry[good_mask]], positions=[1], widths=0.6,
            labels=['Valid Data'], patch_artist=True,
            boxprops=dict(facecolor='lightblue', alpha=0.7))
if np.any(bad_mask):
    ax3.plot(np.ones(np.sum(bad_mask)), photometry[bad_mask], 'rx',
             markersize=12, linewidth=2, label='Rejected (trails)')
ax3.axhline(median_flux, color='purple', linestyle='--',
            alpha=0.5, linewidth=2, label='Median')
ax3.set_ylabel('Flux (DN/s)', fontsize=11)
ax3.set_title('Flux Distribution with Outliers', fontsize=12)
ax3.legend(loc='best')
ax3.grid(True, alpha=0.3, axis='y')
ax3.set_xlim(0.5, 1.5)

pylab.tight_layout()
pylab.show()

# Flag outliers (ONLY LOW VALUES)
for i in range(len(photometry)):
    if modified_zscores[i] < -outlier_threshold:
        trailed_indices.append(i)
        print(f"    TRAIL DETECTED in {image_files[i]}:")
        print(f"        Measured flux: {photometry[i]:.1f} DN/s")
        print(f"        Median flux: {median_flux:.1f} DN/s")
        print(f"        Modified Z-Score: {modified_zscores[i]:.2f}")
        print(f"        Time: {time_offsets[i]:.1f} s")
    else:
        valid_indices.append(i)
```

```
valid_indices = np.array(valid_indices)
trailed_indices = np.array(trailed_indices)

print("\n" + "=" * 60)
print(f"SUMMARY: Found {len(trailed_indices)} trails, "
      f"{len(valid_indices)} good images")
if len(trailed_indices) > 0:
    print(f"Excluded images: {[image_files[i] for i in trailed_indices]}")
print("=" * 60)

return valid_indices

if __name__ == "__main__":
    print("Star Photometry Utilities Module")
    print("=====")
    print("\nAvailable functions:")
    print(" - find_star_center_processed()")
    print(" - detect_and_exclude_star_trails()")
    print("\nImport this module in your notebook with:")
    print(" from star_photometry_utils import find_star_center_processed, detect_and_exclude_"
          "star_trails")
```