

Light Λ hypernuclei studied with chiral hyperon-nucleon and hyperon-nucleon-nucleon forces

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(Dated: February 20, 2025)

A study of light Λ hypernuclei in chiral effective field theory is presented. For the first time chiral Λ NN and Σ NN three-body forces are included consistently. The calculations are performed within the no-core shell model. Results for the separation energies of the hypernuclei ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$, ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}/{}^4_\Lambda\text{He}$, ${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}$, and ${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}$ are given. It is found that the experimental values can be fairly well reproduced once YNN three-body forces are taken into account.

Introduction.— Three-body forces (3BFs) have a long and varied history in nuclear physics [1]. Initially, they were introduced on a phenomenological basis, in order to explain the observed discrepancy between the measured binding energies of light nuclei such as the triton or ${}^4\text{He}$ and the predictions based on realistic nucleon-nucleon (NN) potentials. The concept of 3BFs changed radically in the early 1990s with the pivotal works of Weinberg [2, 3]. He introduced a framework that allows one to construct NN and 3N forces consistently, namely chiral effective field theory (EFT), together with a pertinent power counting which establishes a hierarchy for the relative strength/importance of 3N (4N, ...) forces in relation to that of the NN interaction. Performing few-nucleon calculations based on this scheme is by now standard [4–9].

The 3BFs included in early hypernuclear physics calculations were likewise of purely phenomenological nature [10–13]. However, unlike the present situation in the few-nucleon sector mentioned above, even now hyperon-nucleon-nucleon (YNN) forces are still considered on a phenomenological level in essentially all pertinent investigations. This concerns not only studies of ordinary hypernuclei [14, 15], but in particular the discussion on the role that hyperons play for the size and stability of neutron stars [16–18]. Specifically, for the latter issue, YNN 3BFs are seen as one of the most promising solutions for the so-called hyperon puzzle, i.e. the quest to reconcile the appearance of Λ 's (and possibly other hyperons) at densities realized in compact objects like neutron stars, causing a softening of the equation of state (EOS), with the empirical constraints on their mass-radius relation that can be explained only with a stiff EOS [19–22]. Given their key role for this topic, it is vitally important to put the YNN 3BFs on a more solid ground.

Indeed, the first derivation of 3BFs involving baryons with strangeness (Λ , Σ , Ξ), based on SU(3) chiral EFT, was given only a few years ago [23]. In addition, recently the Λ N- Σ N interaction has been established up to next-

to-next-to-leading order (N^2LO) in the chiral expansion [24], i.e. the order at which the leading YNN force formally appears in the Weinberg counting. Thus all ingredients for a consistent inclusion of hyperon-nucleon (YN) and YNN forces in calculations of Λ hypernuclei are available now. Fortunately, on the computational side, rigorous calculations with so-called *ab initio* methods have become feasible [14, 25–27]. Specifically, those within the no-core shell model (NCSM) have reached a level that allows the computation of hypernuclei up to $A=8$ [28] (or even up to $A=13$ [25]) based on state-of-the-art YN and YNN potentials.

In this letter, we present the first calculation of light Λ hypernuclei ($A=3-7$) employing YN and YNN interactions, both derived from chiral EFT. The essential accomplishment of this work is a consistent treatment of the YN and YNN forces up to N^2LO in the chiral expansion. To the best of our knowledge, there is only one other calculation of hypernuclei ($A=3-5$) with similar ambition, which includes consistently Λ N and Λ NN forces [29]. However, it is performed in pionless EFT at leading order (LO). A recent study of hypernuclei within nuclear lattice effective field theory is likewise restricted to LO Λ N forces [30] and similarly for hyper-neutron matter [31]. There are already calculations that include the chiral YNN force together with chiral YN interactions [32, 33]. However, those have only exploratory character because the strength of the 3BF, encoded in so-called low-energy constants (LECs), was fixed using dimensional arguments, and not by considering actual separation energies. Moreover, these studies are restricted to the hypertriton. In the present work we determine the strength of the 3BF by adjusting the LECs to the ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}/{}^4_\Lambda\text{He}$ and ${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}$ bound states. Thereby we want to answer two important questions: (i) Can the spectrum of $A=3-7$ hypernuclei be described by including 3BFs, and, if so, how well? (ii) Are the resulting 3BFs consistent with the size expected from chiral power counting?

No-core shell model.— We apply the Jacobi NCSM

for calculating the Λ -separation (binding) energies of the $A=3$ -7 hypernuclei. A detailed description of the formalism and of the procedure to extract the binding (separation) energies can be found in Ref. [27]. In all calculations, contributions of the NN(YN) potentials in partial waves up to $J = 6(5)$ are included, while for the 3N interaction all partial waves with total angular momentum $J_{3N} \leq 9/2$ are taken into account. It has been checked that higher partial waves only contribute negligibly compared to the harmonic oscillator (HO) model space uncertainties. In order to speed up the convergence of the NCSM with respect to the model space, all the employed NN, 3N and YN potentials are SRG-evolved to a flow parameter of $\lambda = 1.88 \text{ fm}^{-1}$, see [27] and references therein. The latter is commonly used in nuclear calculations, which, on the one hand, yields rather well-converged nuclear binding energies, and on the other hand, minimizes the possible contribution of SRG-induced 4N and higher-body forces [34]. Furthermore, in all the calculations, the SRG-induced YNN interaction with the total angular momentum $J_{YNN} \leq 5/2$ is included. Based on the contributions of $J_{YNN} \leq 1/2, 3/2$ and $5/2$, the contribution from higher partial waves $J_{YNN} \geq 7/2$ is estimated to be negligibly small and, therefore, is omitted from the calculations. With the proper inclusion of these SRG-induced three-body forces, the otherwise strong dependence of the Λ separation energies on the SRG-flow parameter [27, 35] is practically removed for the $A = 3, 4$ systems and remains insignificantly small for ${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}$ [26, 36]. All calculations in this letter will be based on the SMS NN potential N^4LO^+ [37] with a cutoff of $\Lambda = 550 \text{ MeV}$ and include a corresponding N^2LO 3NF [36]. For the YN interaction the SMS potential $\text{N}^2\text{LO}(550^b)$ from Ref. [24] (also with $\Lambda = 550 \text{ MeV}$) is employed. In addition, for the first time, the full leading chiral YNN forces at N^2LO are taken into account. First exploratory studies of the contributions of the chiral ANN forces to the separation energies have been performed for the $A = 3$ hypernucleus [32, 33] and $A = 3 - 5$ systems [38] using a non-local regulator.

Structure of the three-baryon force.– The general structure of the leading 3BFs within SU(3) chiral EFT has been worked out in detail in [23]. Like in the 3N case [4, 39], there are contributions to the 3BF from two-meson exchanges, one-meson exchanges and 6-baryon contact terms. However, since for YNN the Pauli principle is less restrictive, the corresponding 3BFs have a much richer structure. For example, regarding the contact term, there is only one such contribution to the 3N force, but eight in the ANN– Σ NN system [23]. To be concrete, while the three-nucleon contact potential in its antisymmetrized form (using the antisymmetrizer \mathcal{A}) is given by [39]

$$V_{\text{ct}}^{3N} = \frac{1}{2} E \mathcal{A} \sum_{j \neq k} \vec{\tau}_j \cdot \vec{\tau}_k, \quad (1)$$

the corresponding expression for the ANN \rightarrow ANN potential from the contact term is [23],

$$\begin{aligned} V_{\text{ct}}^{\text{ANN}} = & C'_1 (1 - \vec{\sigma}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_3)(3 + \vec{\tau}_2 \cdot \vec{\tau}_3) \\ & + C'_2 \vec{\sigma}_1 \cdot (\vec{\sigma}_2 + \vec{\sigma}_3) (1 - \vec{\tau}_2 \cdot \vec{\tau}_3) \\ & + C'_3 (3 + \vec{\sigma}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_3)(1 - \vec{\tau}_2 \cdot \vec{\tau}_3). \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

Here, the $\vec{\sigma}_i$ and $\vec{\tau}_i$ are the standard Pauli operators for the spin of the baryons and the isospin of the nucleons, and E and the C' 's are low-energy constants (LECs) that parameterize the strength of the contact interactions. The situation is similar for the one-meson exchange 3BF. In fact, considering only the contribution from one-pion exchange alone, there is one term (LEC) for 3N, two terms (LECs) for ANN [23], and already six further terms with the ANN– Σ NN transition potential.

Since the experimental uncertainty of the ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$ separation energy [40] is comparable to the expected contribution from the ANN 3BF [36, 38], it is not practical to determine the pertinent LECs from the hypertriton. Therefore, as argued in Ref. [24], the only possible and viable way to fix the 3BFs is via studies of the ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}/{}^4_\Lambda\text{He}$ and ${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}$ systems. This strategy is followed here. Still, as should be clear from the discussion above, the number of LECs for the leading YNN 3BF exceeds by far the available experimental constraints from light hypernuclei. Even if we consider only the ANN 3BF we would have to deal with 5 LECs (3 for the contact terms and 2 from the one-pion exchange 3BF) to be compared with only 2 LECs in the 3N case [39].

In the present paper, we restrict ourselves to the pion-exchange contributions, in line with the SMS YN potential [24] where two-meson contributions involving the K and/or η were neglected (which is also consistent with large- N_C arguments [41, 42]), and we exploit the mechanism of resonance saturation via decuplet baryons (Δ , Σ^* , Ξ^*) to estimate the strengths of chiral 3BFs [43–45]. Indeed, by involving decuplet baryons (B^*) the resulting two-pion exchange ANN and Σ NN 3BFs are completely fixed by the $\Delta \rightarrow N\pi$ decay width and SU(3) flavor symmetry. The number of independent LECs for the one-pion exchange 3BFs and the contact term is strongly reduced, namely to two for the ANN– Σ NN 3BFs and to a single LEC for ANN. For example, the LECs of the ANN contact interaction in Eq. (2) can then be written in terms of a simple combination of the two LECs of the leading order $BB \rightarrow BB^*$ contact interaction H_1 and H_2 in SU(3) chiral EFT, see Refs. [43, 44], and amount to

$$C'_1 = C'_3 = \frac{(H_1 + 3H_2)^2}{72\Delta}, \quad C'_2 = 0, \quad (3)$$

where Δ is the average mass splitting between the octet and decuplet baryons, $\Delta \approx 300 \text{ MeV}$. The contact interaction for ANN– Σ NN and Σ NN involve other combinations of H_1 and H_2 [43, 44].

${}^A_\Lambda Z(J^\pi, T)$	w/o YNN	YNN (C'_1, C'_3)	YNN (C'_1, C'_2, C'_3)	Exp. [40]
${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}(1/2^+, 0)$	0.121(4)	0.125(4)	0.155(3)	0.164(43)
${}^4_\Lambda\text{He}(0^+, 1/2)$	1.954(1)	2.027(3)	2.220(2)	2.258(55) (average) 2.169(42) (${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}$) 2.347(36) (${}^4_\Lambda\text{He}$)
${}^4_\Lambda\text{He}(1^+, 1/2)$	1.168(20)	1.010(11)	0.984(12)	1.011(72) (average) 1.081(46) (${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}$) 0.942(36) (${}^4_\Lambda\text{He}$)
${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}(1/2^+, 0)$	3.518(20)	3.152(21)	3.196(20)	3.102(30)
${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}(1/2^+, 0)$	5.719(56)	5.444(57)	5.623(52)	5.619(60)
${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}(3/2^+, 0)$	5.522(70)	5.042(65)	5.040(57)	4.927(60)
${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}(5/2^+, 0)$	3.440(66)	3.205(65)	3.356(60)	3.568(60)

Table I. Separation energies for $A = 3 - 7$ hypernuclei with angular momentum and parity J^π and isospin T in MeV, calculated without and with inclusion of YNN three-body forces. See text for details on the employed NN (YN) and 3N (YNN) potentials. The number in parenthesis indicates the estimated extrapolation uncertainties.

Note that by including decuplet baryons as degrees of freedom in chiral EFT, the pertinent parts of the two-pion exchange ANN and Σ NN 3BF are promoted to NLO as well as contributions that involve contact vertices. Therefore, we expect that using decuplet saturation is a good starting point and should allow one to achieve a reliable semi-quantitative estimate for the effects of the ANN and Σ NN 3BFs.

Results.— Results for the separation energies of the hypernuclei ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$, ${}^4_\Lambda\text{He}$, ${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}$, and ${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}$ without YNN force can be found in the 2nd column of Tab. I. We include in parenthesis the numerical uncertainty due to a necessary extrapolation in the model space size. Obviously, the separation energies based on the two-body interaction alone are already fairly close to the experimental values, cf. the last column. Since, at present, no charge-symmetry breaking (CSB) is included in the YN potential, we have employed the experimentally isospin-averaged separation energies of ${}^4_\Lambda\text{He}/{}^4_\Lambda\text{H}$ (0^+ , 1^+) states in fitting. Our theoretical results should therefore be compared with the averaged separation energies shown. Because CSB can be included perturbatively, fitting to the average is equivalent to including CSB for the fit. The other states are isospin $T = 0$ so that CSB does not contribute.

In a first step, we add ANN and Σ NN 3BFs based purely on decuplet saturation. In this case, there are two independent LECs whose values are adjusted with the aim to reproduce the separation energies for the 0^+ and 1^+ states of ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}/{}^4_\Lambda\text{He}$ and ${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}$. However, this can be only partially achieved, see 3rd column of Tab. I. While for the latter two cases (which turned out to be correlated with each other) the energies with YNN force agree nicely with the experimental values within their uncertainties, the result for the 0^+ state of ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}/{}^4_\Lambda\text{He}$ remains noticeably below the empirical information. Regarding the other

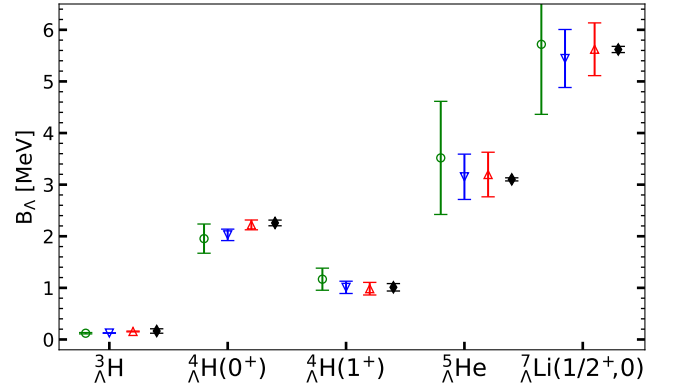


Figure 1. Separation energies for $A = 3 - 7$ hypernuclei. Values at ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}$ show the average of ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}/\text{He}$. Results are shown for the N^2LO YN potential without YNN force (green circles), and including YNN forces strictly (blue down-triangles) or partially constrained (red up-triangles) by decuplet saturation. The bars indicate the estimated truncation error of the chiral expansion, see text. Experimental values (black diamonds) are taken from the chart of hypernucleides [40].

two hypernuclei, not considered when adjusting the LECs of the 3BF, it turns out that the result for ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$ remains practically unchanged while the separation energy for ${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}$ is now smaller than the experimental value. Given that a perfect description of all states was not possible, we chose for the LECs of the YNN force $H_1 = -0.68 F_\pi^{-2}$, $H_2 = 0.016 F_\pi^{-2}$ where $F_\pi = 92.4$ MeV. These values minimized the deviation of the 0^+ state, led to an agreement for the 1^+ state and $A = 5$ within the estimated uncertainty, and are consistent with naturalness.

Given the fact that with the decuplet saturation approximation alone it is not possible to simultaneously describe the levels in the $A = 4$ system and the separation energy of ${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}$, in a second step, we go beyond that scenario. Specifically, we allow the LEC C'_2 to be different from zero while keeping C'_1 and C'_3 the same as in the initial fit. Note that the C'_2 term introduces a 3BF that depends explicitly on the spin of the Λ [30], cf. Eq. (2). The corresponding separation energies are presented in the 4th column of Tab. I, which have been achieved with a $C'_2 = 1310 \text{ GeV}^{-5}$ of the expected size. Obviously, now all the ${}^4_\Lambda\text{He}/\text{H}(0^+, 1^+)$ and ${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}$ separation energies can be well reproduced within the experimental uncertainty. Note that the spin dependent YNN force induces a modest shift of the separation energy of ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$ which brings it in better agreement with the experimental average of the Mainz group [40]. Also the ${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}$ separation energy is in remarkable agreement with experiment.

To provide an estimate for the theoretical uncertainty, we evaluated the truncation error of the chiral expansion based on the Bayesian approach [46, 47]. We learn the convergence of the chiral expansion based on the results that are computed using the LO, NLO and N^2LO YN interactions, see [36] for more details. At NLO and N^2LO we distinguish three cases, namely, without chiral YNN force, and including YNN forces with strict or with partial constraints from decuplet saturation. The separation energies for $A = 3 - 7$ systems at N^2LO together with the theoretical uncertainties are displayed in Fig. 1. Expecting that the fits include the quantitatively most relevant parts of the YNN force, the chiral truncation errors are taken at N^2LO for the calculations including the chiral YNN forces, and at NLO otherwise. The experimental situation [40], is indicated by filled (black) diamonds. Obviously, the chiral truncation errors exceed the extrapolation uncertainties shown in the parentheses in Tab. I. Note that the shifts due to the YNN forces are well within the NLO uncertainties in Fig. 1. This indicates that the YNN contribution is in line with the power counting.

A detailed visualization of our predictions for the energy spectrum of the ${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}$ hypernucleus is provided in Fig. 2, with the excitation spectrum of the core nucleus ${}^6\text{Li}$ being shown on the right hand side. As one can see, with the inclusion of the chiral 3NF, we reproduce the excitation energy of the $J^\pi = 3^+$ state of ${}^6\text{Li}$ fairly well. In order to further reduce the impact of the levels of the core nucleus, we focus our discussion on the relative positions of the energy levels of ${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}$ and plot them with respect to the ground-state centroid energy [49]. The bands indicate the estimated uncertainties from the extrapolation and from the chiral convergence study at NLO and N^2LO for the cases without and with YNN forces, respectively. For the latter case, we also show the truncation error at NLO (hatched area). Without chiral YNN forces, we can only quantitatively reproduce the ground-state split-

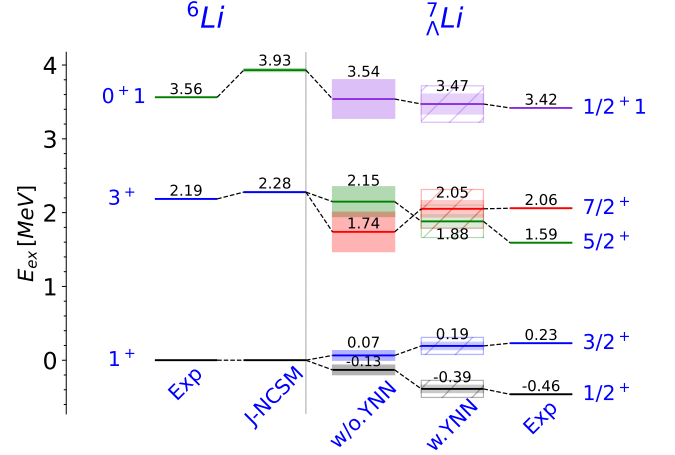


Figure 2. Energy spectrum of ${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}$, calculated without and with YNN three-body forces. Shaded areas show the extrapolated and chiral uncertainties at NLO and N^2LO for the case without and with chiral YNN forces, respectively. For the latter case, the hatched area represent uncertainties at NLO. Experimental values are taken from [48].

ting and the isospin $T = 1$ energy level. In particular, the level ordering of the $5/2^+$ and $7/2^+$ levels is opposite to the experiment. This behaviour is also observed for NLO13 and NLO19 versions of the chiral YN potentials, which differs from our earlier results reported in [49] where the SRG-induced 3N and YNN forces were missing. As clearly seen in the fourth column of Fig. 2, the inclusion of the chiral YNN forces leads to significant improvement in the overall description of the ${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}$ spectrum. Specifically, the ground-state splitting as well as the $T = 1$ level are consistent with experiment within the estimated uncertainties, whereas the $5/2^+$ and $7/2^+$ levels are now correctly ordered. The shown results correspond to YNN forces with relaxed constraints from decuplet saturation, i.e. involving all C'_{1-3} LECs. The results for the strict decuplet scenario are in between the cases w/o YNN and the full calculation and have been omitted to improve the readability of the figure.

Summary.— We have performed a study of light Λ hypernuclei within chiral EFT up to N^2LO where, for the first time, chiral ΛNN and ΣNN three-body forces are included consistently. The LECs of the YNN forces were determined by fitting to the ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}/{}^4_\Lambda\text{He}$ and ${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}$ separation energies, guided by constraints on their values from resonance saturation via decuplet baryons. Results for the hypernuclei ${}^3_\Lambda\text{H}$, ${}^4_\Lambda\text{H}/{}^4_\Lambda\text{He}$, ${}^5_\Lambda\text{He}$, and ${}^7_\Lambda\text{Li}$ could be achieved that agree well with experiments. Our calculations show that a consistent description of Λp scattering data and light hypernuclei is possible, when including 3BFs in line with the power counting of chiral EFT. One can certainly view that as confirmation of our present knowledge of the ΛN - ΣN interaction as represented by

the chiral YN potentials. Nonetheless, one should not forget open issues like the so far basically unconstrained interaction in the higher partial waves of the ΛN system [24, 50] and certain indications that the ΛN interaction could be possibly overall slightly weaker [51]. Finally, it is interesting to note that we observe a trend for repulsive effects of the required 3BFs with increasing A , which might be interpreted as support for one of the possible solutions of the hyperon puzzle in neutron stars.

This project is part of the ERC Advanced Grant “EXOTIC” supported the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 101018170). This work was further supported in part by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) and the NSFC through the funds provided to the Sino-German Collaborative Research Center TRR110 “Symmetries and the Emergence of Structure in QCD” (DFG Project ID 196253076 - TRR 110, NSFC Grant No. 12070131001), and by the MKW NRW under the funding code NW21-024-A. The work of UGM was supported in part by The Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) President’s International Fellowship Initiative (PIFI) (grant no. 2025PD0022). We also acknowledge support of the THEIA net-working activity of the Strong 2020 Project. The numerical calculations were performed on JURECA of the Jülich Supercomputing Centre, Jülich, Germany.

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