Dark Energy Survey Year 6 Results: Photometric Data Set for Cosmology

K. Bechtol 1, I. Sevilla-Noarbe 2, A. Drllica-Wagner 3, 4, 5, B. Yanny 3, 6, R. A. Gruendl 7, 8, E. Sheldon 1, 8, E. S. Rykoff 9, 10, J. De Vicente 2, M. Adamow 6, D. Anbarjavan 2, M. R. Becker 11, G. M. Bernstein 12, A. Carnero Rosell 13, 14, 15, J. Gschwend 14, M. Gorsuch 1, W. G. Hartley 16, M. Jarvis 16, T. Jeltema 17, R. Kron 5, 3, T. A. Manning 6, J. O’Donnell 3, 5, 17, A. Pieres 14, 18, M. Rodríguez-Monroy 19, D. Sanchez CID 12, M. Tabbutt 1 L, T. Tobio San Cipriano 2, D. L. Tucker 3, N. Weaverdyck 20, 21, M. Yamamoto 22, 23, T. M. C. Abbott 24, M. Aguena 14, A. Alarcón 25, S. Allam 13, A. Ammon 22, F. Andrade-Oliveira 26, S. Avila 12, P. H. Bernardinelli 27, E. Bertin 28, 29, J. Blazek 30, D. Brooks 31, D. L. Burke 9, 10, J. Carrettero 32, F. J. Castander 33, 25, R. Cawthon 34, C. Chang 14, A. Choi 35, C. Conselice 16, 37, M. Costanzi 18, 39, 40, M. Crocce 35, L. N. da Costa 14, T. M. Davis 41, S. Desai 12, H. T. Diehl 3, S. Dodelson 34, 4, P. Doel 31, C. Doux 12, 43, A. Ferté 10, B. Flaugher 3, P. Fosalba 33, 25, J. Frieman 24, 4, 3, J. García-Bellido 19, M. Gatti 5, 12, E. Gaztanaga 19, 34, 44, G. Giannini 12, 3, D. Gruen 45, G. Gutierrez 24, K. Herner 3, S. R. Hinton 41, D. L. Hollowood 37, K. Honscheid 46, 47, D. Huterer 48, N. Jeffrey 31, E. Krause 49, K. Kuehn 50, 51, O. Lahav 11, S. Lee 52, C. Lidman 53, 54, M. Lima 55, 54, H. Lin 1, J. L. Marshall 56, J. Mena-Fernández 37, R. Miquel 58, 32, J. J. Mohr 59, 45, J. Muir 60, J. Myeles 62, R. L. C. Ogando 18, A. Palmese 61, A. A. Plazas Malagón 9, 10, A. Porredon 2, 62, J. Pratt 64, 63, M. Ravera 64, A. K. Romer 65, A.Roadman 9, 10, S. Samuroff 30, 32, E. Sanchez 12, V. Scarpine 3, M. Smith 66, M. Soares-Santos 26, E. Suchyta 67, G. Tarle 18, M. A. Troxel 15, V. Vikram 11, A. R. Walker 24, J. Weller 59, 68, P. Wiseman 69, and Y. Zhang 70

(DES Collaboration)

1Physics Department, 2320 Chamberlin Hall, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1511 University Avenue Madison, WI 53706-1390
2Centro de Investigaciones Energéticas, Medioambientales y Tecnológicas (CIEMAT), Madrid, Spain
3Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, 400, Batavia, IL 60510, USA
4Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60637, USA
5Kavli Institute for Cosmological Physics, University of Chicago, IL 60637, USA
6Center for Astrophysical Surveys, National Center for Supercomputing Applications, 1205 West Clark St., Urbana, IL 61801, USA
7Department of Astronomy, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1002 W. Green Street, Urbana, IL 61801, USA
8Brookhaven National Laboratory, 84 Nulle St., Upton, NY 11973, USA
9Kavli Institute for Particle Astrophysics & Cosmology, 450, P. O. Box 2450, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305, USA
10SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, 2575, Lake Merced Blvd., Menlo Park, CA 94025, USA
11Argonne National Laboratory, 9700 South Cass Avenue, Lemont, IL 60439, USA
12Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA
13Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias, E-38205 La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain
14Laboratório Interinstitucional de e-Astronomia - LIneA, Rua Gal. José Cristino 77, Rio de Janeiro, RJ - 20921-400, Brazil
15Universidade de La Laguna, Dpto. Astrofísica, E-38206 La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain
16Department of Astronomy, University of Geneva, ch. d’Écogia 16, CH-1290 Versoix, Switzerland
17Santa Cruz Institute for Particle Physics, Santa Cruz, CA 95064, USA
18Observatório Nacional, Rua Gal. José Cristino 77, Rio de Janeiro, RJ - 20921-400, Brazil
19Instituto de Física Teórica UAM/CSIC, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, 28049 Madrid, Spain
20Department of Astronomy, University of California, Berkeley, 501 Campbell Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720, USA
21Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, 1 Cyclotron Road, Berkeley, CA 94720, USA
22Department of Astrophysical Sciences, Princeton University, Peyton Hall, Princeton, NJ 08544, USA
23Physics Department, Duke University Darum, NC 27708, USA
24Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory/NSF NOIRLab, Casilla 603, La Serena, Chile
25Institute of Space Sciences (ICE, CSIC), Campus UAB, Carrer de Can Magrans, s/n, 08193 Barcelona, Spain
26Physik-Institut — University of Zurich, Winterthurerstrasse 190, 8057 Zurich, Switzerland

K. Bechtol (kbechtol@wisc.edu), I. Sevilla (ignacio.sevilla@ciemat.es), A. Drllica-Wagner (kadrlica@fnal.gov)
We describe the photometric data set assembled from the full six years of observations by the Dark Energy Survey (DES) in support of static-sky cosmology analyses. DES Y6 Gold is a curated data set derived from DES Data Release 2 (DR2) that incorporates improved measurement, photometric calibration, object classification and value added information. Y6 Gold comprises nearly 5000 deg² of grizY imaging in the south Galactic cap and includes 669 million objects with a depth of \( i_{AB} \sim 23.4 \) mag at S/N \( \sim 10 \) for extended objects and a top-of-the-atmosphere photometric uniformity \( < 2 \) mmag. Y6 Gold augments DES DR2 with simultaneous fits to multi-epoch photometry for more robust galaxy shapes, colors, and photometric redshift estimates. Y6 Gold features improved morphological star-galaxy classification with efficiency 98.6% and contamination 0.8% for galaxies with 17.5 < \( i_{AB} < 22.5 \). Additionally, it includes per-object quality information, and accompanying...
maps of the footprint coverage, masked regions, imaging depth, survey conditions, and astrophysical foregrounds that are used for cosmology analyses. After quality selections, benchmark samples contain 448 million galaxies and 120 million stars. This paper will be complemented by online data access and documentation.

**Keywords:** Surveys – Observational cosmology – Dark energy – Catalogs – Astronomy image processing

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Optical and near-infrared imaging surveys have played an essential role in developing the standard model of cosmology that invokes a cosmological constant and cold, collisionless dark matter (ΛCDM). For a fixed allocation of telescope observing time, broadband photometric surveys assemble the largest samples of galaxies that can be used for statistical analyses, while also providing the opportunity to combine several complementary probes of the cosmic expansion history and growth of structure (e.g., Abbott et al. 2019, Heymans et al. 2021). The current generation of imaging surveys, such as the Pan-STARRS1 surveys (PS1; Chambers et al. 2016), the Hyper Suprime-Cam Subaru Strategic Program (HSC-SSP; Aihara et al. 2019), the Ultraviolet Near-Infrared Optical Northern Survey (UNIONS),¹ the Kilo-Degree Survey (KiDS; Kuijken et al. 2019), the DESI Legacy Imaging Surveys (Dey et al. 2019), the DECam Local Volume Exploration survey (DELVE; Drlica-Wagner et al. 2021), and the Dark Energy Survey (DES; DES Collaboration 2005, 2016) collectively provide deep, multi-band imaging over nearly the entire high-Galactic-latitude sky, and have cataloged more than a billion galaxies and thousands of supernovae spanning 10 billion years of cosmic history. Together with spectroscopic surveys like eBOSS (Alam et al. 2021) and DESI (DESI Collaboration 2016), imaging surveys yield measurements of the expansion rate and large-scale structure in the late-time universe that are complementary to precision measurements of the early Universe (e.g., Planck Collaboration 2020). Combined analyses of the early- and late-time observations rigorously test the ΛCDM paradigm, with percent-level measurement uncertainties on the ΛCDM model parameters (e.g., DES Collaboration 2022, 2024b, DESI Collaboration 2024).

To support both cosmological and other astronomical investigations, DES data products are publicly released via two pathways, as summarized in Table 1. Two general DES data releases, DES DR1 (DES Collaboration 2018) and DES DR2 (DES Collaboration 2021) provide coadded images and associated object catalogs for the first three and six years of the survey, respectively. Further image-processing algorithms, survey characterization, and value-added data products have been developed to control systematic uncertainties at the level required for static-sky cosmology analyses by the DES Collaboration. These data products and validation analyses have been compiled into DES “Gold” releases, including SVA1 Gold, Y1 Gold (Drlica-Wagner et al. 2018), and Y3 Gold (Sevilla-Noarbe et al. 2021). Here, we present the final iteration of the DES Gold data products, the Year 6 (Y6) Gold, assembled from the full six-year DES data set and intended to support legacy cosmology analyses using the DES data.

DES Y6 Gold is based on the same DECam data that were released as DES DR2. As expected, Y6 Gold is very similar in depth and extent to DR2, but provides additional photometry measurements from multi-epoch fitting, photometric redshift estimates, footprint and foreground masks, additional summary flags, survey property maps and an improved object classification scheme. These products are described in the sections that follow, and Table 2 summarizes a set of metrics that describe the DES Y6 Gold release.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In Section 2, we provide an overview of DES and the resultant six-year data set. Section 3 provides a brief summary of the DES data processing with a focus on new algorithms implemented for Y6 Gold. The value-added content of the Y6 Gold catalog is described in Section 4, whereas the new ancillary maps are detailed in Section 5. We remark on known issues in Section 6 and mechanisms for using the data in Section 7. We conclude by discussing the importance of Y6 Gold in Section 8.

2. **SURVEY OVERVIEW AND DERIVED DATA SETS**

2.1. **Survey overview**

DES used the 570 megapixel Dark Energy Camera (DECam; Flaugher et al. 2015) on the 4-m Blanco Telescope at Cerro Tololo Interamerican Observatory in Chile to image the southern Galactic cap in five broad-band filters (grizY) extending from ~ 400 nm to ~ 1060 nm (DES Collaboration 2021). Images were collected on 760 distinct full or half nights between 2013 August 15 and 2019 January 9. DES operated in two survey modes (Neilsen et al. 2019):

- The **Wide-Field Survey** is optimized for cosmological analyses using weak gravitational lensing, galaxy clustering, and galaxy clusters. The Wide-Field Survey spans ~ 5000 deg² that was imaged with dithered tilings in grizY (see DES Collaboration 2021 for details). The Wide-Field Survey footprint was designed to significantly overlap with the South Pole Telescope

¹ https://www.skysurvey.cc/
**Table 1.** Dark Energy Survey data releases

| Release      | Area   | Depth | Objects | Photometry uniformity | Supplemental data | Reference                  |
|--------------|--------|-------|---------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| SVA1 Gold    | ~ 250  | 23.68 | 25M     | < 15                  | Photo-z           | Drlica-Wagner et al. (2018) |
| Y1 Gold      | 1786   | 23.29 | 137M    | < 15                  | BPZ/DNF photo-z, MOF, maps, classification | DES Collaboration (2018)   |
| DES DR1      | 5186   | 23.33 | 399M    | < 3                   | None              | DES Collaboration (2018)   |
| Y3 Gold      | 4946   | 23.34 | 388M    | < 3                   | BPZ/DNF photo-z, SOFMOF, maps, classification | Sevilla-Noarbe et al. (2021) |
| Y3 Deep Fields | 5.88   | 25.0  | 2.8M (1.6M NIR) | < 5 | ugrizY JHK bands | Hartley & Choi et al. 2022 |
| DES DR2      | 4913   | 23.8  | 691M    | ~ 2                   | None              | DES Collaboration (2021)   |
| Y6 Gold      | 4923   | 23.8  | 669M    | < 2                   | DNF photo-z, fitydGA,M, maps, classification | This work                  |

Note—All releases are publicly accessible at https://des.ncsa.illinois.edu/releases. Quoted depth corresponds to S/N = 10 in 2 arcsec diameter apertures. SOF and MOF are multi-epoch pipelines replaced by fityd, described in Section 3.4. The Y6 Gold area is computed for simultaneous two-exposure coverage in g, whereas the DES DR2 area is quoted for one exposure in all five grizY bands.

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**Table 2.** Key numbers and data quality summary for the DES Wide Survey (Y6 Gold; this work). All magnitudes are in the AB system.

| Parameter | Parameter | Band |
|-----------|-----------|------|
|           |           | g    | r    | i    | z    | Y    |

| Parameter | Parameter | Value |
|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Median PSF FWHM (arcsec) | 1.13 | 0.99 | 0.90 | 0.87 | 0.93 |
| Sky Coverage (griz intersection, deg$^2$) | 4923 | ... |
| Coadd Median Astrometric Relative Precision (angular distance, mas) | 27 | ... |
| Photometric Uniformity vs. Gaia (mmag)$^a$ | 1.8 | ... |
| Median Coadd Magnitude Limit, 1.95 arcsec diameter (S/N = 10) | 24.7 | 24.4 | 23.8 | 23.1 | 21.7 |
| Coadd 90% Completeness Limit for extended objects (mag)$^b$ | 23.9 | 23.2 | 22.7 | 22.4 | ... |
| Multi-Epoch Galaxy Magnitude Limit (S/N = 10, BDF)$^c$ | 24.2$^{+0.1}_{-0.2}$ | 23.9$^{+0.1}_{-0.2}$ | 23.4$^{+0.1}_{-0.2}$ | 22.7$^{+0.1}_{-0.2}$ | 21.3$^{+0.2}_{-0.2}$ |
| Galaxy Selection (17.5 ≤ MAG_AUTO_I ≤ 22.5; EXT_MASH = 4) | Efficiency 98.6%; Contamination 0.8% |
| Stellar Selection (17.5 ≤ MAG_AUTO_I ≤ 22.5; 0 ≤ EXT_MASH ≤ 1) | Efficiency 94.6%; Contamination 1.5% |
| Object density (arcmin$^{-2}$)$^d$ | Overall: 37.4; Galaxies: 28.9 |

$^a$ Photometric uniformity measured vs. Gaia’s G band, which encompasses DECam’s griz.  
$^b$ As measured by BALROG (Anbajagane & Tabbutt et al., in prep.).  
$^c$ Median values with 16% and 84% percentile errors from the magnitude limit distribution.  
$^d$ Object density determined for all objects in Y6 Gold footprint outside foreground regions, and the subset of those classified as high-confidence galaxies (SOF/MASH ≥ 3).  

The DES Collaboration has assembled several high-level data products derived from DECam imaging collected by DES:

- The **Supernova Survey** is a time-domain survey of 10 DECam fields, amounting to a total of ∼ 27 deg$^2$ that was imaged in griz with an approximately weekly cadence (Smith et al. 2020) with minimal dithering imaging. Difference imaging analysis of the Supernova Survey fields has enabled the discovery of thousands of Type Ia supernovae (SNIa) and precision photometric lightcurves are computed following Brout et al. (2019).

  2.2. **Derived data sets**

- **DES DR2** and **Y6 Gold** are assembled from data collected by the Wide-Field Survey. A total of 72,217 DECam exposures were deemed of sufficient quality to pass on to the next step of image detrending, calibration and finally coaddition and object detection. DES DR2 and Y6 Gold contain the same number of objects, which were detected and measured by a pipeline based on the SourceExtractor (Bertin & Arnouts 1996) software (see Section 3 and DES Collaboration 2021 for details). Additional pipelines are run over the DES
DR2 coadded catalogs to obtain the Y6 Gold data set, which are the focus of this paper. The Y6 Gold catalog caters to several science cases including extragalactic astronomy, galaxy cluster cosmology, and cosmology analyses using the large scale distribution of the positions of the objects according to their photometric properties.

• The shear catalogs are specialized data sets used for applications that involve weak gravitational lensing measurements. In Year 6, two different shear catalogs were produced using data from the Wide-Field Survey: the Bayesian Fourier Domain method (BFD; Bernstein & Armstrong 2014) catalog uses the same detections as DR2 and Y6 Gold, whereas the metadetect (Sheldon et al. 2023) pipeline produces a set of 5 distinct catalogs based on the same images, which are coadded in a parallel pipeline (Yamamoto, Becker et al. in prep.) and have 5 different sets of detections. The metadetect catalogs are produced to calibrate bias in shear measurements produced by noise, modeling errors and selection (including detection), as described in Sheldon et al. (2023). The shear catalogs will be released separately.

• Finally, the Supernova Survey exposures are coadded to produce the Deep Field data sets. Together with DECam imaging of the COSMOS field, this specialized processing enables high S/N measurements of galaxies ~1.5 to 2.0 mag fainter than the Wide-Field Survey. A subset of these data have been combined with deep near-infrared imaging to produce a reference object catalog used for various applications in DES cosmology analyses (Hartley & Choi et al. 2022, Toribio San Cipriano et al. 2024). A larger region of DECam and NIR deep fields are being processed and analyzed (Gruendl et al., in prep).

Figure 1 shows the DES footprint, including the Wide-Field Survey and Supernovae Survey. Given the cosmological goals of the survey, DES avoids the Galactic plane to minimize stellar foregrounds and extinction from interstellar dust.

In this work, all quoted data quality characteristics (e.g., Table 2) refer to the subset of exposures included in the DES DR2 coadded images unless stated otherwise.

2.3. Comparison to Y3 Gold

Given the emphasis on the use of Y6 Gold for cosmology measurements, it is worth highlighting improvements over the previous cosmology release, Y3 Gold:

• Greater depth and uniformity (as shown in Table 1) so that 70% more objects were detected with respect to the previous release.
• Improved photometry as a consequence of the above.
• Better point photometric redshift precision (~20% improvement) and accuracy at z ~ 1.
• A more robust star-galaxy classification, that includes an additional purity level for galaxy samples, as well as a new boosted decision-tree-based algorithm that improves the performance over a larger range of magnitudes.
• Additional flagging of foreground objects and artifacts.
• Footprint and foreground maps with higher resolution, and a new map to correct for Galactic cirrus.

3. DATA PROCESSING

The DES Data Management system (DESDM; Morganson et al. 2018), running at the National Center for Supercomputer Applications (NCSA) as the core data processing center, converted raw DECam data to detrended and coadded images and catalogs. These data were distributed to the DES Collaboration in the form of files and database tables. Additional value-added columns and ancillary data products were produced across several of the collaborating DES institutions and collected at NCSA for distribution.

3.1. Detrending

The single-exposure (or “single-epoch”) detrending of instrumental signatures for DES DR1 is described in Morganson et al. (2018). The main processing changes implemented for DES DR2 (and shared by Y6 Gold) are described in DES Collaboration (2021) and summarized here:

• New calibrations (biases, darks, flats, etc.) were derived for the later survey years (Section 3.2).
• The astrometric reference catalog was updated to Gaia DR2 (Gaia Collaboration 2016, 2018).
• A utility was introduced to search for and mask a region of anomalous charge arising from a variable hot pixel (“light bulb”) on CCD 46, which was first noticed in exposures shortly after 2017 September 1.
• A utility was implemented to search for and mask occurrences of an amplifier instability that arose for amplifier B of CCD 41 starting 2018 August 15. The instability manifests intermittently as a charge transfer inefficiency that results in streaked row reads with varying background charge. The utility looks for images where the streaked row background is discontinuous
Figure 1. DES footprint in equatorial coordinates. The \( \sim 5000 \text{deg}^2 \) wide-area survey footprint is shown as a black outline, with overplotted REDMAGiC (Rozo et al. 2016) galaxies, for the redshift bin \( z = [0.5, 0.6] \). The supernova field locations are also shown as purple circles with their approximate area to scale (corresponding to one full DECam field of view). A few other footprints from present and future major photometric surveys are shown for reference. This and the other skymap plots included in this work use the equal-area McBryde-Thomas flat-polar quartic projection (McBryde & Thomas 1949).

Y6 Gold measurements build upon the astrometric and photometric calibration of DR2. Thus, the underlying Y6 Gold astrometric positions, tied to Gaia DR2 (Gaia Collaboration 2016, 2018), and photometric calibrations, derived by the forward global calibration module (FGCM; Burke et al. 2018), are the same as those provided in the DR2 public data release.

The median astrometric precision of the coadd averaged over the DES footprint is estimated to be 27 mas (DES Collaboration 2021). Based on a comparison between Gaia \( G \)-band synthesized magnitudes transformed from stellar DES \( griz \) magnitudes (\( G_{\text{pred}} \)) and measured Gaia \( G \)-band magnitudes (\( G_{\text{meas}} \)) from Gaia DR3 (Gaia Collaboration 2023), the photometric uniformity of Y6 Gold is at the 1.8 mmag (0.18%) RMS level or better across the DES footprint (Rykoff et al. 2023). The absolute calibration of the catalog is computed with reference to the Hubble Space Telescope CalSpec standard star C26202. Including systematic errors, the absolute flux system is known at the \( \approx 1\% \) level. Rykoff et al. (2023) present DES \( grizY \) magnitudes for 17 million stars with \( i \)-band magnitudes mostly in the range 16 \( \lesssim i \lesssim 21 \) as a photometric calibration reference catalog for optical imaging in the southern hemisphere.

All photometry for Y6 Gold is based on the APER8 system used for FGCM, with aperture corrections computed as described in Section 4.1.1. Briefly, the APER8 system nor-

from one row to the next and flags the entire amplifier when triggered.\(^3\)

- A utility was added to use the detections of streaks on individual CCDs (such as those created by satellites) to identify potential trails on adjacent CCDs.

- The single-epoch catalog effective detection threshold was lowered to \( S/N \gtrsim 3 \) due to configuration changes in PSFEx (Bertin 2011), as well as changes to the detection threshold and deblending settings for the initial SourceExtractor-generated catalogs.

- The sky subtraction algorithm, described in sections 3.2 and 4.3 of Morganson et al. (2018) remains unchanged from Y3: a simultaneous fit to all 60 or 61 CCDs of an exposure with a low order PCA template is performed to remove large scale scattered light gradients and a pupil ghost. During image coaddition, a constant median background level is subtracted from each CCD to bring the sky level close to zero.

3 These utilities are publicly available among the DESDM software repositories: https://github.com/DarkEnergySurvey/pixcorrect/
malizes PSF-fitted stellar photometry to aperture photometry within a fixed radius (the 8th in a set of 12 apertures) of diameter 5.84 arcsec.

In Figure 2 a qualitative illustration of the improvement of the stellar locus in the vicinity of the globular cluster NGC 1261 is shown in successive Gold releases. The tightness of the stellar locus is indicative of the superior photometric quality in Y6.

3.3. Coaddition and Object Detection

Object detection is performed on combined $r+i+z$ coadd detection images (the three bands simultaneously) using SourceExtractor with an approximate threshold of $S/N \gtrsim 5$, resulting in a set of 691,483,608 objects across the survey footprint, identical to that released in DES DR2. For the DES Y6 cosmological analyses, we run additional forced photometry measurement pipelines starting from this initial detection catalog and compile the results in Y6 Gold.

To facilitate multi-epoch photometry, we use the DR2 catalog to build Multi-Epoch Data Structures (MEDS; Jarvis et al. 2016) comprised of “postage stamp” images extracted from the coadd and single-epoch images for each object. Along with the science frame data, the postage stamps also carry the weight, mask, background, and PSF model information. Two types of MEDS files were created for Y6. The first set carries single-epoch PSF models from PSFEX, and was used for the Y6 Gold photometry measurements using fitvd (see Section 3.4). The second set incorporates PSF models generated by PIFF (Jarvis et al. 2021), and was used with the BDF shear measurement pipeline. The other shear pipeline, metadetect, also uses PIFF PSF models, but uses cell-based coadds rather than MEDS files (Sheldon et al. 2020).

3.4. Multi-Epoch Photometry

The previous Y1 and Y3 Gold science pipelines developed a multi-object, multi-epoch, multi-band fit (MOF) for each object, where objects were grouped according to a friends-of-friends (FoF) algorithm (Drlica-Wagner et al. 2018, Sevilla-Noarbe et al. 2021). A single-object-fit (SOF) variant was also employed that masked nearby objects rather than performing a simultaneous multi-object fit. For DES Y6, object deblending was first performed on coadded images using a new code (shredder, see Hartley & Choi et al. 2022). A multi-band, multi-epoch fit was then performed on the original single-epoch images, with neighbors subtracted using the models from the deblender. The new framework, fitvd (first described in Hartley & Choi et al. 2022) performed the neighbor subtraction and ran fitting algorithms from ngmix (Sheldon 2014), using postage stamp images stored in MEDS files. Again a simpler version using only masking of neighbors was also performed. Ultimately we used only the version with masked neighbors for most analyses, because the photometry was quite consistent for the two techniques. Our interpretation is that blending is not a significant effect on photometry for most objects in the DES data, which is significantly shallower than that of HSC-SSP and the forthcoming Rubin Observatory’s Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST).

The basic fitvd algorithm solves for position, flux, intrinsic size and ellipticity parameters. For DES Y6, the fit is performed assuming two different source models. The first was a simple, zero-size point-source model to provide PSF photometry. The second assumed a Bulge+Disk Fixed (BDF) model (the size ratio of bulge effective radius to disk effective radius is fixed to unity). In each case, the object model is convolved with a parametric model of the PSF consisting of a five-component Gaussian mixture model fit to the reconstructed PSFEx model for each CCD. The fit is then performed simultaneously on all single-epoch observations of a given object across all bands.

The DES Y6 BDF model is fit with the following free parameters:

- The flux in each band
- The offset from the fiducial position in arcseconds
- The size squared ($T = \langle x^2 \rangle + \langle y^2 \rangle$).
- The 2-component ellipticity ($\{g_1, g_2\}$).
- The fraction of the flux in a bulge (DeVaucouleurs Sérsic model with index $n = 4$), with the remaining flux assigned to an exponential disk (Sérsic model with index $n = 1$) (frac_dev).

The only free parameters of the PSF model are the flux and the offset from the fiducial position.

The Y6 Gold catalog includes measured fluxes, magnitudes, and uncertainties for the PSF and BDF models calculated in each of the individual $grizY$ bands. For the BDF model, we include the color covariance terms corresponding to each of the off-diagonal elements in the variance matrix of $grizY$ photometry. In addition, the Y6 Gold catalog includes the positional offset, size, ellipticity, and frac_dev, along with their associated uncertainties, from the BDF model fit.

In addition to PSF and BDF models, Gaussian aperture (GAp) fluxes are also calculated (Everett et al. 2022, Hartley et al. 2022). A Gaussian with FWHM = 4 arcsec is multiplied with the BDF model and integrated analytically to give a total flux. While this will necessarily undercount the flux, it is less sensitive to the wings of the object model. This is useful when the frac_dev of the object is very noisy, which can result in very noisy total flux estimates. Artificially high values of frac_dev can result in large total fluxes due to the large outer extent of the DeVaucouleurs profile. Using GAp fluxes can be more useful, for example, when trying
to estimate the photometric transfer function with a source injection scheme such as Balrog (Everett et al. 2022, Anbajanage & Tabbutt et al., in prep.).

Additional multi-epoch processing was performed to derive a morphological object classifier based on the difference of Gaussian-weighted fluxes. Fluxes were derived using a Gaussian weighted with a size equal to the size of the PSF and a Gaussian with a weight function increased by 5%. We define the ratio of these measurements, $C_{\text{raw}} = -2.5 \log_{10}(F_{\text{psf}}/F)$. For point-like objects, $C_{\text{raw}}$ will be equal to a particular value that depends on the PSF. This value is calibrated by performing the same Gaussian fit using the PSF model, $C_{\text{psf}} = -2.5 \log_{10}(F_{\text{psf}}/F_{\text{psf}})$. We then define the concentration parameter, $C_{\text{con}} = C_{\text{psf}} - C_{\text{raw}}$. Point-like objects occupy a narrow locus at $C_{\text{con}} = 0$, while galaxies generally have $C_{\text{con}} > 0$. While the $C_{\text{con}}$ parameter was not found to perform significantly better for star/galaxy classification than a prescription based on the BDF fits (Section 4.2), the multi-epoch Gaussian fit is very robust and measurements of $C_{\text{con}}$ exist for nearly all objects in the Y6 Gold catalog (in contrast, the BDF fits fail for $\sim 0.2\%$ of objects).

4. Y6 Gold OBJECT CATALOG

The DES Y6 Gold catalog is a merger of columns drawn from DES DR2, the multi-epoch photometric measurements described in the previous section, and new quantities described in this section. These include corrections to the measured multi-epoch photometry, star-galaxy classification, object quality flags that summarize other flags from measurement pipelines and features of the data, and a photometric redshift estimator.

4.1. Photometric Corrections

Y6 Gold includes columns for PSF and BDF model photometry that have been normalized to the MAG_APER_8 system used for global photometric calibration, and dereddened with a fiducial interstellar extinction correction. These are labeled as _CORRECTED in the catalogs and are the most uniform across the survey footprint.

4.1.1. Aperture Corrections

The DES DR2 photometric zeropoints were established by FGCM using the PSF flux measurements of stars in the single-epoch catalogs measured by SourceExtractor assuming the PSFEx model. These measurements are placed on the APER_8 (5.84-arcsec-diameter aperture) system through the normalization of the PSFEx model. An aperture correction is necessary to place the multi-epoch fitvd PSF and BDF model measurements of stars on this same photometric system. This aperture correction is estimated at the location of each catalog object using the ngmix Gaussian mixture model fit to the PSF (Section 3.4) and calculating the fraction of the PSF model flux contained within a 5.84-arcsec-diameter circular aperture (APER_8) relative to the total PSF model flux. This correction is typically $\sim 2\%$, in the sense that the corrected flux in the APER_8 system for stars is $\sim 2\%$ fainter than the uncorrected total PSF flux. This procedure (i.e., assuming a point-like object) is used to calculate an aperture flux correction for all objects in the Y6 Gold catalog. The correction is reasonably accurate for very small galaxies (i.e., galaxies with angular sizes of $< 1$ arcsec before convolution with the PSF). However, larger galaxies have a larger fraction of their light extending beyond the APER_8 aperture, and thus the aperture corrections estimated assuming a point-like source does not reduce the flux enough to make the fitvd model measurements match the APER_8 measurements. Note that this aperture correction is not intended to address long-standing issues concerning how to deal with extended galaxy profiles in the calculation of total galaxy magnitudes, but rather simply ensures that the fitvd PSF and BDF magnitudes of stellar objects are on the FGCM system, and that the flux measurements converge in the small-size limit of unresolved galaxies.

4.1.2. Interstellar Extinction

The Y6 Gold table includes a column containing the $E(B−V)$ values from the reddening map of Schlegel et al. (1998) (SFD98) extracted at the location of each catalog object. The $E(B−V)$ values were obtained using a linear interpolation of the Zenithal Equal Area projected map distributed by SFD98 and are the same as provided in DES DR2. The FGCM magnitudes can be corrected by an amount $A_b = E(B−V) \times R_b$, where $R_b$ is computed per band as described in DES Collaboration (2018) using the DES Standard Bandpasses. Following Section 4.2 of DES Collaboration (2018), we incorporate a renormalization of the original SFD98 reddening map ($N = 0.78$; Schlafly & Finkbeiner 2011) to our fiducial reddening coefficients so that these coefficients can be used directly with $E(B−V)$ values from the SFD98 (see Section 6.4 for details on this renormalization). The values for $R_b$ are thus the same as for DES DR1 and DR2, and are replicated here for completeness: $R_g = 3.186$, $R_r = 2.140$, $R_i = 1.569$, $R_z = 1.196$, and $R_F = 1.048$.

4.2. Object Classification

Following previous DES analyses (e.g., Sevilla-Noarbe et al. 2021, DES Collaboration 2021), we define high-quality samples of point-like objects (e.g., stars, quasars) and extended objects (e.g., galaxies) based on morphological measurements. We assign each object in the Y6 Gold catalog to a morphological class based on the multi-epoch measurements, the weighted average of the single-epoch measurements, and measurements on the coadded images with larger values corresponding to higher-confidence extended objects (EXT_MASH; Table 3). Furthermore, we train a gradient boosted decision tree algorithm (XGBoost;
Figure 2. Illustration of the increasing calibration and selection quality in successive data releases, from Y1 Gold (left), Y3 Gold (center) to Y6 Gold (right). This figure shows the stellar locus for selected stars in the outskirts of the globular cluster NGC 1261.

Figure 3. Performance of morphological star/galaxy classification in DES Y6 Gold. The conventional cut-based classifier is shown in solid, dashed, and dotted lines for three different object selections. Black lines correspond to selection efficiency (true positive rate), while gray lines show contamination (false discovery rate). The green/yellow colored lines show the performance of the XGBoost classifier for different selections on the continuously valued XGB_PRED classifier output.

Chen & Guestrin 2016) on the multi-epoch and single-epoch weighted average measurements to automate the classification processes (EXT_XGB and XGB_PRED). Here, we summarize the performance of these morphological classifiers, while more details can be found in Appendix A.

We assess the efficiency (true positive rate) and contamination (false discovery rate) of each of our output classes in the bright ($i < 18.5$ mag) and faint ($i > 18.5$ mag) domains using a high-Galactic-latitude region of the footprint. In the bright domain, we use infrared data from the Vista Hemisphere Survey (VHS DR5; McMahon et al. 2013) to classify stars and galaxies as demonstrated in Baldry et al. (2010) and Sevilla-Noarbe et al. (2018). We perform a 0.5 arcsec astrometric match between the Y6 Gold and VHS catalogs at $0^\circ < \alpha_{2000} < 45^\circ$ and $\delta_{2000} \sim 0^\circ$ ($-68^\circ < b < -48^\circ$), and define a stellar vs. non-stellar classification based on DES

Table 3. Morphological object classes

| Value | Description                 |
|-------|-----------------------------|
| 4     | Ultra-pure galaxy sample    |
| 3     | High-confidence galaxies    |
| 2     | Mostly galaxies             |
| 1     | Likely stars                |
| 0     | High-confidence stars       |
| -9    | Data not available          |

Note—Discrete object classes assigned in the EXT_MASH, EXT_FITVD, EXT_XGB variables. The EXT_COADD and EXT_WAVG variables do not include class 4.
ors. Interestingly, we find that the morphological contamination from double stars that are morphologically classified as stars based on their infrared color is partially driven by the increasing fraction of sample at an increase in the stellar contamination in the bright galaxy end, suggesting that these contaminants occupy a distinct region of the morphological parameter space, which can be identified through more complex machine-learning techniques.

A new class of flagged objects with suspect measurements in Y6 Gold, so-called “super-spreader” objects, are identified as having extremely large sizes and large size measurement uncertainty when measured by fitvd. These objects were initially identified in Y3 synthetic source injection analyses (see Figure 21 of Everett et al. 2022) and subsequently in the Y6 redMaGiC sample as outliers possessing much too large photometric uncertainty relative to their brightness (see Rozo et al. 2016, for a description of the redMaGiC sample). We attribute these fitting failures to catastrophic over-estimation of the object size that occurs more frequently in crowded fields and regions with structured diffuse light (Appendix C.1).

We flag another class of “noise objects” that are sufficiently faint to have a predicted signal-to-noise ratio smaller than unity. To identify these objects, we defined flux thresholds using the DECam exposure time calculator assuming a lunar phase of 10 days after new Moon and the approximate integrated exposure time of the DES coadds (900 seconds). Objects in the DES Wide-Field Survey with measured magnitudes fainter than the AB magnitude thresholds of \{r,i,z\} = \{26.5, 26.2, 25.6\} mag are flagged as likely noise artifacts. Note that this selection may remove r-band outliers which may be of interest for certain analyses.

Extreme color outliers are defined to catch lingering reflections and residual noise artifacts that would hinder photo-z estimates. This flag is found to be very correlated with the noise objects. For similar reasons, we use the \(riz\) detection bands and define color outliers as any of the colors \(r-i\) or \(i-z\) to fall outside the \([-5, 5]\) range, using the AUTO magnitudes.

Phantom objects are objects that have a bright magnitude in coadds, but have not been detected in individual single epochs. These are coming mostly from diffraction spikes and excess light around bright stars.

4.4. Photometric Redshifts

The Y6 Gold catalog provides default photometric redshift estimates for every object based on their fitvd-corrected (by extinction and aperture) magnitudes and colors. These estimates are based on the directional neighbourhood fitting (DNF; De Vicente et al. 2016) code, that was success-
fully applied to and validated on the DES Y3 data (Sevilla-Noarbe et al. 2021, Toribio San Cipriano et al. 2024). It uses a nearest-neighbor approach with a directional metric that accounts simultaneously for magnitudes and colors to obtain the photometric redshift for each object (DNF\_Z) using around 80 neighbors (DNF\_NNEIGHBORS). The photo-\(z\) error (DNF\_ZSIGMA) is estimated as the quadratic mean of the uncertainty due to photometric errors (DNF\_ZERR\_PARAM) and the uncertainty obtained from the residuals of the fit (DNF\_ZERR\_FIT). On the other hand, only the single nearest neighbor is used to provide a point value (DNF\_ZN) to construct an \(N(\zeta)\) estimate. Other approaches relying on calibration with deep fields (e.g., Myles et al. 2021, Giannini et al. 2024) may be used additionally for these distributions, and will be released in the corresponding analyses.

Figure 4 shows some standard photo-\(z\) metrics for a Y3 and Y6 Gold selection matched to a spectroscopic data sample. This data set has been compiled with the framework described in Gschwend et al. (2018) and includes 545,796 spectroscopic redshifts deemed of optimal quality (FLAG\_DES = 4, according to the classification in Gschwend et al. 2018). Note that the spectroscopic sample is brighter than Y6 Gold, and further studies are required to understand its performance in detail (e.g., Hartley et al. 2020). The lens sample for the combined weak lensing and galaxy clustering analyses, as well as the galaxy sample used for measurements of baryon acoustic oscillations, are drawn from intermediate depth samples of Y6 Gold (i \(\lesssim\) 22.5 mag) for which these metrics would approximately apply. Most of the relevant galaxies (i.e., galaxies in the magnitude range of interest) from the spectroscopic reference dataset come from public releases such as SDSS DR16 (62%, Ahumada et al. 2020) or 2dF (9%, Colless et al. 2003), with deeper and narrower surveys covering the fainter magnitudes such as DEEP2 (2%, Newman et al. 2013) and VVDS (1%, Le Fèvre et al. 2013). VIPERS also constitutes a major source of moderate to faint galaxies with a very broad color coverage (5%, Scodeggl et al. 2018). DES specific proprietary programs were done using AAOmega on the AAT to complement these spectra (3%, Lidman et al. 2020). Finally, an assortment of other shallow and deep datasets were included as well, for increased color and redshift coverage.

5. ANCILLARY MAPS
In addition to the object catalog, the Y6 Gold data set includes several maps of the survey geometry, survey properties, and astrophysical foregrounds that complement the interpretation of the catalogs. A technical advance introduced in Y6 Gold is the use of the `healsparse`\(^4\) software to store the map and mask data. `healsparse` is a sparse implementation of HEALPix in Python that optimizes memory usage by using a coarser resolution in those areas of the sky which are not covered. In the case of Y6 Gold, this allows practical usage of maps with HEALPix resolution of \(\text{nside} = 16384\) corresponding to pixels of area 0.046 square arcminutes. The enhanced resolution is sufficient for detailed representation of the gaps between sensors on the DECam focal plane mosaic as well as masked regions around individual bright stars (Figure 5).

The maps described in this section include the survey footprint (Section 5.1), a mask of astrophysical foregrounds (Section 5.2), survey property maps (Section 5.3), and a mask of diffuse foregrounds (i.e., Galactic cirrus and nebulosity; Appendix C.1).

### 5.1. Footprint

The Y6 Gold footprint is a description of the angular mask that contains the regions of the sky that are deemed useful for cosmological analyses with the Y6 Gold catalog. The source of ‘truth’ for which parts of the sky have been observed are `mangle` (Swanson et al. 2008a) files that describe in detail what is the geometry of the CCDs on overlapping exposures for each band. In turn, these complex, high resolution maps are represented into a standardized HEALPix map of \(\text{nside} = 16384\), which represents the underlying survey geometry at suitable accuracy for our needs. The Y6 Gold footprint then is represented via a binary `healsparse` file of \(\text{nside} = 16384\) resolution, constructed by applying certain conditions on the `mangle` maps at these resolutions. These include:

- At least 2 exposures in each of \(g, r, i, \text{and} z\) in the `NUM_IMAGE` survey property map.
- \(f_{\text{griz}} > 0.5\), where \(f_{\text{griz}}\) is the fraction of each pixel that has simultaneous coverage in the four bands when considering \(\text{nside} = 4096\) pixels, which is used for compatibility purposes as some Y3 analyses used this coarser version.

A footprint map with only the two-exposure condition is also made available. For the case of the coarse \(\text{nside} = 4096\) footprint version, a complementary map with the same resolution is available denoting the fraction of each pixel that has simultaneous coverage in the four bands \((0 \leq f_{\text{griz}} \leq 1)\).

Each object in Y6 Gold has an associated `FLAGS_FOOTPRINT` value which is equal to the footprint map value at the position of the object (using the full-resolution `ALPHAWIN_J2000`, `DELTAWIN_J2000` coordinates) provided that the object also has the `SourceExtractor` quantities \(\text{NITER}_\text{MODEL}_{\{G,R,I,Z\}} > 0\) for every band. This ensures that the object indeed has the observations in all four bands, in case it happens to be in one of the residual regions of a valid footprint pixel, lacking some of the observations in the key bands. The total Y6 Gold footprint area using the high-resolution map with the conditions described above is 4923.21 \(\text{deg}^2\). The Y6 Gold area computed in this way is slightly larger than the DES DR2 area (4913 \(\text{deg}^2\)), which was estimated requiring at least one exposure in each of the five \(\text{grizY}\) bands.

The Y6 Gold footprint area is slightly smaller than the Y3 Gold footprint area, 4945.87 \(\text{deg}^2\). This is a result of the increase of both the survey depth and the threshold for minimum number of exposures (changed from 1 to 2) between the two releases.

For a threshold of 2 exposures in each of \(g, r, i, \text{and} z\), the equivalent footprint area for Y3 Gold is 4495.26 \(\text{deg}^2\), demonstrating the increase in coverage from Y3 to Y6 Gold.

### 5.2. Foreground Mask

Y6 Gold includes a mask to identify regions of the footprint that are likely to be impacted by the presence of bright astrophysical foreground objects. Similar to Y3 Gold, we define the foreground mask for bright stars, globular clusters, and nearby galaxies. For bright stars, we mask regions from a magnitude-dependent radius that was derived from the density of DES Y6 objects where the \(i\)-band magnitude measured by the bulge-disk fit is much brighter than that `SourceExtractor` \(\text{AUTO}\) measurement (i.e., \(\text{BDF\_MAG\_I - MAG\_AUTO\_I} < -1\)).

This mask is constructed as a HEALPix bit map (\(\text{nside} = 4096\)), and catalog objects are assigned a `FLAGS_FOREGROUND` value corresponding to the sum of the bits in that position of the map, according to their sky coordinates \((\alpha_{\text{2000}}, \delta_{\text{2000}})\). In cases where the mask radius is smaller than a single HEALPix pixel, the pixel containing the object is used as the mask. The specific bits in the foreground mask are defined in Table 5. A `healsparse` high resolution map (\(\text{nside} = 16384\)) is also made available upon release, though `FLAGS_FOREGROUND` in the table does not follow this convention.

- **Bit 1, Gaia bright stars**: bright stars from Gaia DR2 \((G < 7)\) were masked based on the \(G\)-band magnitude.

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\(^4\) https://healsparse.readthedocs.io
Figure 5. A side-by-side comparison of the different footprint resolutions using tile DES0219-0541 in the g band as an example. The coadd image is shown as a reference on the left. In the middle panel, the binary mask at the highest resolution available in Y6 Gold is shown (\textit{nside} = 16384). Finally, the coarser resolution (\textit{nside} = 4096) mask with approximate coverage fraction is shown on the right. This coverage fraction represents how many high resolution subpixels contain valid information for this band.

- **Bit 2, Yale bright star catalog**: stars from the Yale Bright Star Catalog (Hoffleit & Jaschek 1991) were masked based on the V-band magnitude.

- **Bit 4, 2MASS bright stars**: bright stars (4 < J < 8) magnitude from the 2MASS catalog (Skrutskie et al. 2006) were masked based on the J-band magnitude.

- **Bit 8, Gaia moderately bright stars**: moderately bright stars (7 < G < 11.5) from Gaia DR2 were masked based on the G-band magnitude.

- **Bit 16, 2MASS moderately bright stars**: moderately bright (8 < J < 12) stars from the 2MASS catalog (Skrutskie et al. 2006).

- **Bit 32, Bright galaxies**: area around large, nearby galaxies found in the HyperLEDA\(^5\) catalog (Makarov et al. 2014).

- **Bit 64, Milky Way satellites**: Milky Way globular clusters and classical dwarf spheroidal galaxies in the footprint were masked (Table 6).

- **Bit 128, Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC) periphery**: the periphery of the LMC (60 < \(\alpha_{2000}\) < 100deg and \(-70 < \delta_{2000} < -58\)deg) was masked due to the significant increase in the number density of stars.

- **Bit 256, Very bright stars**: very bright stars that produce significant scattered light artifacts were explicitly masked to remove areas with high densities of objects with anomalous colors. These stars are listed in Table 7.

The magnitude-dependent radii for the Gaia, Yale, and 2MASS masks were defined based on a cumulative plot of the ratio of objects with inconsistent \textit{BDF} and \textit{AUTO} magnitudes as a function of distance to the bright sources. These “bad” objects denoted image artifacts that clustered around the central pixels and radius was defined by inspection so that they are not dominant. Further quality cuts with \texttt{FLAGS\_GOLD} eliminate additional objects outside these masks. The LMC and very bright star masks were defined on an ad-hoc basis by visual inspection.

5.3. Survey Properties

Survey property maps represent spatially varying distributions of observation characteristics and astrophysical line-
of-sight effects that systematically impact the detection and measurement of sources across the footprint, and consequently affect statistical analysis of the large-scale distribution of galaxies (e.g., Rodríguez-Monroy et al. 2022). The Y6 Gold survey property maps are distributed in both HEALPix and in healsparse formats. In both cases, the map content is derived from mangle polygon masks that en-

### Table 6. Milky Way globular clusters and satellite galaxy exclusion list.

| Name        | α2000, δ2000 (deg, deg) | Radius (deg) |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| AM 1        | (58.7612, -49.6144)    | 0.015        |
| Eridanus    | (66.1854, -21.1869)    | 0.015        |
| Fornax      | (39.9971, -34.4492)    | 0.7          |
| NGC 0288    | (13.1979, -26.59)      | 0.2          |
| NGC 1261    | (48.0637, -55.2169)    | 0.15         |
| NGC 1851    | (78.5262, -40.0472)    | 0.2          |
| NGC 1904    | (81.0442, -24.5242)    | 0.17         |
| NGC 7089    | (323.375, -0.8167)     | 0.22         |
| Reticulum   | (69.0375, -58.58833)   | 0.08         |
| Sculptor    | (15.03875, -33.7092)   | 0.7          |
| Whiting 1   | (30.7375, -3.25277)    | 0.015        |

**Note:** AM1, Eridanus, and Whiting 1 have angular sizes that are smaller than a single $n_{side} = 4096$ HEALPix pixel. Thus, their mask radius is set to the approximate angular size of a pixel.

### Table 7. Very bright stars included in the foreground mask. Third column indicates the masking radius applied for each case.

| Name        | α2000, δ2000 (deg, deg) | Radius (deg) |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| α Phe       | (6.5708, -42.3061)      | 2.0          |
| α Eri       | (24.4288, -57.2367)     | 1.7          |
| α Hyi       | (29.6925, -61.5697)     | 0.5          |
| α Col       | (84.9121, -34.0741)     | 1.0          |
| α Car       | (95.9879, -52.6958)     | 2.5          |
| α Pav       | (306.41214, -56.7350)   | 1.7          |
| α Gru       | (332.0583, -46.9611)    | 1.5          |
| β Gru       | (340.6671, -46.8847)    | 2.0          |
| π1 Gru      | (335.6629, -45.9478)    | 0.5          |
| R Dor       | (69.1900, -62.0775)     | 0.5          |
code the full-resolution coadd image geometry. The full list of survey property maps can be found in Appendix C.

6. CAVEATS AND KNOWN ISSUES

6.1. Background offset

Y6 Gold photometry is impacted at a low level by both global and local background over-subtraction that is likely attributed to the extended PSF of bright stars and galaxies, coupled with the spatial scale of sky background estimation. The effect can be recognized through ratios of SourceExtractor aperture fluxes measured for two different aperture radii averaged over a large number of test stars. In the case of ideal background modeling and a fixed PSF, this ratio should be independent of both the flux of the stars used for the test and their spatial location within the footprint. For Y6 Gold, we find that the ratio of aperture fluxes exhibits a flux dependence, with the large-aperture photometry of fainter stars being more impacted by background over-subtraction. The amplitude of the background offset is correlated with the density of bright stars across the survey footprint. The largest over-subtraction occurs at an angular separation of 1–2 arcmin around bright stars and galaxies, corresponding to the 1.1 arcmin × 1.1 arcmin gridding scale used for background estimation. Analysis suggests that the extended wings of the PSF are being treated as a background, resulting in over-subtraction relative to the natural sky level.

6.2. Spurious sources and catastrophic measurement errors

Removing super-spreader objects (FLAGS_GOLD = 8) was found to be potentially problematic for the analyses of galaxies in the central regions of galaxy clusters. Some modifications were introduced to mitigate this problem in the final Y6 Gold catalog. However, specific care is advised for the study of galaxies in dense environments, including comparative tests with and without the super-spreader cut.

6.3. FITVD Failures

Three tiles (DES0456-5705, DES0456-5705, DES0424-3249) experienced partial corruption during the main fitvd run. This led to spatially correlated failures of the fitvd measurements. Some cosmology papers (e.g., DES Collaboration 2024a) used an earlier version of Y6 Gold that masked out these three tiles, corresponding to a loss of 1.5 deg² (0.03% of the footprint area). Complete measurements for those three tiles were restored for the final version of Y6 Gold released here.

6.4. Extinction

As described in Section 4.1.2, the R₈ coefficients provided by the DES data releases apply a renormalization of N = 0.78 to the measured E(B−V) values from SFD98. This renormalization was originally suggested by Schlafly et al. (2010) and was later used to calculate the R₈ values in Table 6 of Schlafly & Finkbeiner (2011). However, Schlafly & Finkbeiner (2011) suggested that a renormalization of N = 0.86 may be more appropriate in low-reddening regions that have E(B−V) < 0.2, which is the case for most of the DES footprint. Users may easily rescale the R₈ extinction values provided by Y6 Gold with their preferred renormalization of the SFD98 maps.

7. USING Y6 GOLD

The Y6 Gold data products and user documentation will be released at https://des.ncsa.illinois.edu/releases alongside previous major DES releases. A selection of the most important columns of the catalog is provided in Appendix B. Y6 Gold includes the value-added object catalog together with maps detailed in Section 5 in HEALPix and healsparsel formats.

General usage recommendations are listed below.

- Use FLAGS_FOOTPRINT = 1 to select objects located within the standard Y6 Gold footprint, as described in Section 5.1.
- Regions with astrophysical foregrounds identified in Section 5.2 can present various problems in terms of photometry, spurious detections, obscuration, etc. The FLAGS_FOREGROUND = 0 selection is generally recommended for extragalactic studies.
- As explained in Section 4.3, FLAGS_GOLD facilitates the selection of good quality objects by summarizing various flags and signatures of poor reconstructions in a single bitmask. A FLAGS_GOLD = 0 selection will suffice for most applications.
- All photometry measurements include atmospheric and instrumental calibration derived from FGCM (i.e., top-of-the-atmosphere photometry; Section 3.2). By default, reported fluxes/magnitudes are NOT corrected for interstellar dust extinction. Final top-of-the-Galaxy photometry can be obtained by applying an aperture correction and fiducial de-reddening (Section 4.1); only the measurements with the _CORRECTED suffix take into account these two adjustments.
- The EXT_MASH star/galaxy separator is expected to be appropriate for most scientific applications. This classifier is based on morphological quantities, as described in Section 4.2 and Appendix A.1. The method employs EXT_FITVD as the main classifier for an object, but reverts to EXT_WAVG or EXT_COADD measurements as necessary. For cosmology analyses, the selection EXT_MASH = 4 is a
recommended starting point, since it shows low stellar contamination up to the magnitude limit, with a decrease in galaxy selection efficiency only beyond \( l > 22.5 \) mag. The outputs of the XGBoost classifier (EXT\_XGB and XGB\_PRED) have been found to outperform EXT\_MASH, but have received much less validation in the context of cosmological analyses.

The Y6 Gold data used for most Y6 cosmology analyses corresponds to DES internal version 2.2.

8. SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

The Y6 Gold data products presented here, together with weak lensing shear (Yamamoto & Becker et al., in prep.) and Deep Field (Gruendl et al., in prep.) catalogs, form the foundation of legacy static-sky cosmology from the full observational data set of DES. Components of the final Y6 Gold release, summarized in Table 2, include:

- A catalog of 669 million high-quality objects covering \( \sim 5000 \) deg\(^2\) of the southern Galactic cap to a depth of \( i_{AB} \sim 23.4 \) at \( S/N \sim 10 \) for extended objects with measurements in the \( grizY \) bands derived from the DES Wide-Field Survey data released in DES DR2 (DES Collaboration 2021).

- Flux measurements for PSF, BDF, and GAP models derived from simultaneous fits to multi-epoch, multi-band photometry to enable more robust determination of colors and morphology.

- Per-object aperture corrections and interstellar extinction estimates to take full advantage of top-of-the-atmosphere photometric uniformity of \(< 2 \) mmag.

- Improved morphological object classification schemes based on both conventional and machine-learning approaches.

- Photometric redshifts derived with the DNF estimator (De Vicente et al. 2016).

- An expanded set of per-object flags to select reliable object samples.

- Foreground mask to select recommended regions for extragalactic studies.

- High-resolution footprint and survey property maps representing the observational coverage and properties of the DES data set.

These curated and validated data products will enable some of the tightest constraints on the standard cosmological model to date, and are well suited for detailed statistical analyses of extragalactic populations and the Milky Way stellar halo. Data products and documentation are publicly available at https://des.ncsa.illinois.edu/releases.

A new generation of wide-area imaging surveys will soon advance our understanding of new physics implied by cosmological observations and theory. Ground-based surveys including the Vera C. Rubin Observatory’s LSST will catalog \( > 10^{10} \) galaxies and \( > 10^{7} \) Type Ia supernovae (Ivezić et al. 2019). The Euclid (Euclid Collaboration 2024) and Nancy Grace Roman (Spergel et al. 2015) observatories will use high-resolution space-based imaging to cover complementary spatial regions, depth ranges, and wavelengths. Meeting the statistical grasp of these new projects to make accurate cosmological inferences will require even more stringent control of systematic effects related to the detectors, atmosphere, and survey observations. DES has been an important development and testing ground for pixel-level processing, calibration, and measurement algorithms, several of which are now being incorporated into the LSST Science Pipelines (Bosch et al. 2018, 2019) including methods for representing survey geometry and metadata (healsparse), PSF modeling (PIFF), photometric calibration (FGCM), astrometric calibration with simultaneous solution across bands and coadd input images, survey-scale synthetic source injection (Balrog), cell-based coaddition, weak lensing shear measurement (metadetection, BFD), and usage of deep field processing for accurate shape and color references for the wide survey. Compelling science questions, new observational capabilities, and continuously improving methods for data management and analysis promise an exciting future for wide-area imaging surveys for years to come.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Lynne Jones and Jean-Charles Cuillandre for help with the LSST and Euclid footprints.

Contribution statement: KB led the Y6 Gold development and contributed to manuscript writing; ISN contributed to catalog and mask creation and manuscript writing; ADW developed the XGB star/galaxy classifier and contributed to manuscript writing; BY & RG led many technical aspects of the DES Data Management production and contributed to manuscript writing; ES designed the fitvd and ngmix algorithms and contributed to the manuscript. Authors ER, JdV, MA, DA, MRB, GB, ACR, JG, MG, WGH, MJ, TJ, RK, AM, JO, AP, MRM, DSC, MT, LTSC, DLT, NW, and MY contributed to various aspects of assembling and validating Y6 Gold including the creation of specific data products, scientific validation, manuscript writing, manuscript review, data product documentation, and data release, as well as coordinating the processes mentioned above. The remaining authors have made contributions to this paper that include, but are not limited to, the construction of DECam and other
aspects of collecting the data; data processing and calibration; developing broadly used methods, codes, and simulations; running the pipelines and validation tests; and promoting the science analysis. WGH & RK served as internal reviewers for the manuscript.

Funding for the DES Projects has been provided by the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. National Science Foundation, the Ministry of Science and Education of Spain, the Science and Technology Facilities Council of the United Kingdom, the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the Kavli Institute of Cosmological Physics at the University of Chicago, the Center for Cosmology and Astro-Particle Physics at the Ohio State University, the Mitchell Institute for Fundamental Physics and Astronomy at Texas A&M University, Financiadora de Estudos e Projetos, Fundação Carlos Chagas Filho de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico and the Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovação, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Collaborating Institutions in the Dark Energy Survey.

The Collaborating Institutions areArgonne National Laboratory, the University of California at Santa Cruz, the University of Cambridge, Centro de Investigaciones Energéticas, Medioambientales y Tecnológicas-Madrid, the University of Chicago, University College London, the DES-Brazil Consortium, the University of Edinburgh, the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) Zürich, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the Institut de Ciències de l’Espai (IEEC/CSIC), the Institut de Física d’Altes Energies, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München and the associated Excellence Cluster Universe, the University of Michigan, NSF NOIRLab, the University of Nottingham, The Ohio State University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Portsmouth, SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, Stanford University, the University of Sussex, Texas A&M University, and the OzDES Membership Consortium.

Based in part on observations at NSF Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory at NSF NOIRLab (NOIRLab Prop. ID 2012B-0001; PI: J. Frieman), which is managed by the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA) under a cooperative agreement with the National Science Foundation.

The DES data management system is supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant Numbers AST-1138766 and AST-1536171. The DES participants from Spanish institutions are partially supported by MICINN under grants PID2021-123012, PID2021-128989, PID2022-141079, SEV-2016-0588, CEX2020-001058-M and CEX2020-001007-S, some of which include ERDF funds from the European Union. IFAE is partially funded by the CERCA program of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

We acknowledge support from the Brazilian Instituto Nacional de Ciências Tecnologia (INCT) do e-Universo (CNPq grant 465376/2014-2).

This work has made use of data from the European Space Agency (ESA) mission Gaia (https://www.cosmos.esa.int/gaia), processed by the Gaia Data Processing and Analysis Consortium (DPAC, https://www.cosmos.esa.int/web/gaia/dpac/consortium). Funding for the DPAC has been provided by national institutions, in particular the institutions participating in the Gaia Multilateral Agreement.

This paper makes use of observations obtained as part of the VISTA Hemisphere Survey, ESO Program, 179.A-2010 (PI: McMahon).

The Hyper Suprime-Cam (HSC) collaboration includes the astronomical communities of Japan and Taiwan, and Princeton University. The HSC instrument development and software were developed by the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan (NAOJ), the Kavli Institute for the Physics and Mathematics of the Universe (Kavli IPMU), the University of Tokyo, the High Energy Accelerator Research Organization (KEK), the Academia Sinica Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics in Taiwan (ASIAA), and Princeton University. Funding was contributed by the FIRST program from the Japanese Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST), the Toray Science Foundation, NAOJ, Kavli IPMU, KEK, ASIAA, and Princeton University.

This paper is based on data collected at the Subaru Telescope and retrieved from the HSC data archive system, which is operated by the Subaru Telescope and Astronomy Data Center (ADC) at NAOJ. Data analysis was in part carried out with the cooperation of Center for Computational Astrophysics (CICA), NAOJ. We are honored and grateful for the opportunity of observing the Universe from Maunakea, which has cultural, historical and natural significance in Hawaii.

This paper makes use of software developed for Vera C. Rubin Observatory. We thank the Rubin Observatory for making their code available as free software at http://pipelines.lsst.io/.

This manuscript has been authored by Fermi Research Alliance, LLC under Contract No. DE-AC02-07CH11359 with the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science, Office of High Energy Physics.

Facility: Blanco (DECam)
Software: astropy (Astropy Collaboration 2013), decasu,\textsuperscript{6} DNF (De Vicente et al. 2016),\textsuperscript{7} easyaccess (Carrasco Kind et al. 2019), fitsio,\textsuperscript{8} fpack (Pence et al. 2010), HEALPix (Górski et al. 2005),\textsuperscript{9} healpy (Zonca et al. 2019),\textsuperscript{10} healsparse,\textsuperscript{11} mangle (Hamilton & Tegmark 2004, Swanson et al. 2008b), matplotlib (Hunter 2007), numpy (Van Der Walt et al. 2011), PSFEx (Bertin 2011), PIFF (Jarvis et al. 2021), SCAMP (Bertin 2006), scpy (Jones et al. 2001), skyproj,\textsuperscript{12} SourceExtractor (Bertin & Arnouts 1996), SWarp (Bertin et al. 2002, Bertin 2010), TOPCAT (Taylor 2005), XGBoost (Chen & Guestrin 2016).

APPENDIX

A. OBJECT CLASSIFICATION

The DES Y6 Gold morphological objects classification scheme follows from similar schemes developed for DES Y3 Gold (Section 6.1 and Appendix B in Sevilla-Noarbe et al. 2021) and DES DR2 (Section 4.7 in DES Collaboration 2021). This approach defines independent object classes based on the multi-epoch fitvd measurements, the weighted average of the SourceExtractor measurements on the individual images, and the SourceExtractor measurements on the coadded images. These independent classifications are then combined hierarchically to provide a single classification for every object in DES Y6 Gold. In addition, DES Y6 Gold includes a gradient boosted decision tree model that incorporates morphological information in an automated classification procedure. The continuously valued output of the XGBoost model is divided into discrete object classes that roughly match the completeness of the conventional classifier. We discuss each of these classification approaches in more detail below.

A.1. Conventional Classifiers

Independent object classifications are derived from the multi-epoch fitvd measurements (EXT_FITVD), the weighted average of SourceExtractor measurements on the individual images (EXT_WAVG), and the SourceExtractor measurements on the coadded images (EXT_COADD). Each classifier assigns an integer value from 0 to 4, with 0 being high-confidence stars/QSOs and 4 being high-confidence galaxies. When the class cannot be computed based on the specific measurement technique, a default value of −9 is assigned. These independent classifications are combined hierarchically to provide a classification for every object in DES Y6 Gold (EXT_MASH).

The fitvd extended classifier (EXT_FITVD) is based on a series of cuts in the space of measured size (BDF_T) vs. signal-to-noise (log\textsubscript{10}(BDF_S2N)) (Figure A.1). In this space, a set of precision-recall curves (i.e., completeness versus purity) were created by varying the BDF_T threshold to separate stars and galaxies. The cuts in this space were based on the threshold value that maximized the Matthews Correlation Coefficient giving equal weights to stars and galaxies, and alternatives that gave higher weights to the purity of target populations. The threshold for each class is expressed as a linear interpolation function, \( f_i \), that returns the threshold on BDF_T (\( y \)) as a function of \( \log_{10}(BDF_S2N) (x) \). The values for these interpolation functions are shown in Table A.1. The integer value of the EXT_FITVD classifier is then defined as the sum of the thresholds that the object exceeds.

\[
\text{EXT}_\text{FITVD} = \sum_{i} \{ \text{BDF}_T > f_i(\log_{10}(\text{BDF}_S2N)) \}. \tag{A1}
\]

The weighted average extended classifier (EXT_WAVG) is built from the weighted average of the SourceExtractor \( i \)-band SPREAD\_MODEL and SPREADERR\_MODEL measurements from the individual exposures. This classifier makes use of the most accurate PSF for each individual exposure, but is limited to the depth of a single exposure.

\[
\text{EXT}_\text{WAVG} = ((\text{WAVG}_\text{SPREAD\_MODEL}_I + 3.0 \cdot \text{WAVG}_\text{SPREADERR\_MODEL}_I) > 0.005) \\
+ ((\text{WAVG}_\text{SPREAD\_MODEL}_I + 1.0 \cdot \text{WAVG}_\text{SPREADERR\_MODEL}_I) > 0.003) \\
+ ((\text{WAVG}_\text{SPREAD\_MODEL}_I - 0.5 \cdot \text{WAVG}_\text{SPREADERR\_MODEL}_I) > 0.001) \tag{A2}
\]

\textsuperscript{6} https://github.com/erykoff/decasu
\textsuperscript{7} https://github.com/ltoribiosc/DNF_photoz
\textsuperscript{8} https://github.com/esheldon/fitsio
\textsuperscript{9} http://healpix.sourceforge.net
\textsuperscript{10} https://github.com/healpy/healpy
\textsuperscript{11} https://healsparse.readthedocs.io/en/latest/
\textsuperscript{12} https://github.com/LSSTDESC/skyproj
Figure A.1. Conventional star/galaxy classes are defined in pairs of morphological parameters from the fitvd (left), WAVG (middle), or COADD (right) measurements. Each panel shows the two-parameter space where the extended classes are defined. The background color indicates the fraction of objects classified as stars using a morphological selection from HSC PDR2 and infrared data from CLAUDS in the XMM-LSS field (Desprez et al. 2023).

Table A.1. Interpolation nodes for EXT_FITVD.

| x    | y1   | y2   | y3   | y4   |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| -3.0 | -0.1 | -0.028 | 0.028 | 0.252 |
| 0.79891862 | -0.1 | -0.028 | 0.028 | 0.252 |
| 0.90845217 | -0.1 | -0.028 | 0.008 | 0.188 |
| 0.98558583 | -0.1 | -0.028 | 0 | 0.14 |
| 1.05791208 | -0.1 | -0.028 | 0.004 | 0.096 |
| 1.13603715 | -0.1 | -0.028 | 0.012 | 0.104 |
| 1.22479487 | -0.1 | -0.028 | 0.012 | 0.052 |
| 1.33572223 | -0.1 | -0.012 | 0.004 | 0.048 |
| 1.48983602 | -0.012 | 0.005 | 0.012 | 0.04 |
| 1.74124395 | 0.008 | 0.022 | 0.024 | 0.052 |
| 2.43187589 | 0.016 | 0.04 | 0.04 | 0.088 |
| 6.0 | 0.016 | 0.04 | 0.04 | 0.088 |

The coadd extended classifier (EXT_COADD) is built from the SourceExtractor measurements of SPREAD_MODEL and SPREADERR_MODEL on the i-band coadd images. This is the most complete classifier (returning a value for nearly every object), but it suffers from the limitations of the coadded image PSF that is subject to discontinuities and sharp variations in depth. For this reason, it is given the lowest priority.
Table A.2. Input parameters to the XGBoost star/galaxy classifier.

| Variable Name       | Description                                                                 |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CONC                | Concentration parameter from DESCONC                                        |
| BDF_T               | Multi-epoch buldge + disk fit size parameter                                |
| $\log_{10}(\text{BDF}_S2N)$ | Logarithm of the multi-epoch bulge+disk fit signal-to-noise                 |
| BDF_T_ERR           | Uncertainty on the multi-epoch buldge+disk fit size parameter               |
| WAVG_SPREAD_MODEL_I | Weighted average SourceExtractor SPREAD_MODEL in $i$-band                   |
| WAVG_SPREADERR_MODEL_I | Weighted average SourceExtractor SPREADERR_MODEL in $i$-band              |

\[
\text{EXT}_\text{COADD} = \left( (\text{SPREAD}_\text{MODEL}_I + 3.0 \times \text{SPREADERR}_\text{MODEL}_I) > 0.005 \right) \\
+ ( (\text{SPREAD}_\text{MODEL}_I + 1.0 \times \text{SPREADERR}_\text{MODEL}_I) > 0.003 \right) \\
+ ( (\text{SPREAD}_\text{MODEL}_I - 1.0 \times \text{SPREADERR}_\text{MODEL}_I) > 0.002) \\
\]

\(\text{EXT}_\text{MASH} = \begin{cases} 
\text{EXT}_\text{FITVD}, & \text{if } \text{EXT}_\text{FITVD} > -9 \\
\text{EXT}_\text{WAVG}, & \text{elif } \text{EXT}_\text{WAVG} > -9 \\
\text{EXT}_\text{COADD}, & \text{elif } \text{EXT}_\text{COADD} > -9 \\
-9, & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases}\)

The combined extended classifier, \(\text{EXT}_\text{MASH}\), is assembled from the combination of \(\text{EXT}_\text{FITVD}\), \(\text{EXT}_\text{WAVG}\), and \(\text{EXT}_\text{COADD}\) classifications.

### A.2. XGBoost Classifier

Machine learning provides another well-tested approach to problems of star/galaxy classification (e.g., Cabayol et al. 2019). In the context of DES Y1, a wide variety of ML models were explored for star/galaxy classification (Sevilla-Noarbe et al. 2018). Here, we apply the popular gradient-boosted decision tree algorithm, XGBoost (Chen & Guestrin 2016), to perform a classification of stars and galaxies in DES Y6 Gold. Our training sample is assembled from two high-purity samples covering the bright and faint ends of the DES catalog. At the bright end, we use a combination of Gaia EDR3 morphology (Gaia Collaboration 2021) and SDSS DR17 spectral classifications (Abdurro’uf et al. 2022). At the faint end, we used the combination of HSC-SSP PDR2 morphology and CLAUDS infrared colors assembled in the XMM-LSS field by Desprez et al. (2023). In assembling these "truth" labels for training the XGBoost classifier, we were specifically focused on the purity of our samples rather than their completeness.

The XGBoost model was trained on a set of six parameters listed in Table A.2. During training, the input data set was augmented with a small (5%) sample where one or more of the input parameters were explicitly set as missing. The XGBoost algorithm can deal with missing values through leaf trifurcation and was thus trained to be robust against one or more missing measurements in the real data. Optimization of the XGBoost hyperparameters was explored using scikit-learn RandomSearchCV. The specific scientific focus when designing the XGBoost classifier was on maximizing the completeness and purity of the stellar sample at faint magnitudes; however, it was also found to deliver excellent performance for galaxies.

The output of the XGBoost classifier is a continuous valued variable (\(\text{XGB}_\text{PRED}\)). Values of \(\text{XGB}_\text{PRED} \sim 0\) indicate extended (galaxy-like) objects, while values of \(\text{XGB}_\text{PRED} \sim 1\) indicate point-like (stellar) objects. Following the convention of the classical cut-based classifiers (Appendix A.1), the sample of objects was divided into discrete classes enumerated by integer values of \{-9, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4\} by placing cuts on the \(\text{XGB}_\text{PRED}\) output. The placement of these cuts was designed to return approximately the same number of objects as the equivalent \(\text{EXT}_\text{MASH}\) class when applied to the full DES Y6 Gold object catalog. Again, a value of \(\text{EXT}_\text{XGB} = -9\) indicates no data. In general, the XGBoost-based classifier is found to outperform the conventional classifiers (i.e., giving higher efficiency at fixed contamination, or vice versa, lower contamination at fixed efficiency). However, the XGBoost classification has not been implemented on simulation–injection–recovery tests due to the fact that the CONC parameter was not measured for the simulated object samples.
Table A.3. Performance of the morphological star/galaxy separation.

| Selection | 17.5 ≤ MAG_AUTO_I ≤ 22.5 | 16.5 ≤ MAG_AUTO_I ≤ 23.5 |
|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
|           | Efficiency | Contamination | Efficiency | Contamination |
| Galaxy Selection |          |              |          |              |
| 2 ≤ EXT_MASH ≤ 4 | 99.6%  | 1.3%  | 99.2%  | 1.8%  |
| 3 ≤ EXT_MASH ≤ 4 | 99.6%  | 1.3%  | 98.8%  | 1.6%  |
| EXT_MASH = 4     | 98.6%  | 0.8%  | 96.3%  | 1.0%  |
| 2 ≤ EXT_XGB ≤ 4 | 99.0%  | 0.5%  | 97.7%  | 1.0%  |
| 3 ≤ EXT_XGB ≤ 4 | 98.3%  | 0.4%  | 96.2%  | 0.8%  |
| EXT_XGB = 4     | 96.7%  | 0.3%  | 92.5%  | 0.5%  |
| XGB_PRED ≤ 0.65 | 99.6%  | 1.1%  | 99.5%  | 2.1%  |
| XGB_PRED ≤ 0.50 | 99.6%  | 0.9%  | 99.3%  | 1.7%  |
| XGB_PRED ≤ 0.058| 98.6%  | 0.4%  | 96.7%  | 0.8%  |
| Stellar Selection |          |              |          |              |
| 0 ≤ EXT_MASH ≤ 1 | 89.2%  | 0.7%  | 80.0%  | 2.0%  |
| 0 ≤ EXT_MASH ≤ 2 | 94.6%  | 1.5%  | 88.9%  | 5.2%  |
| 0 ≤ EXT_MASH ≤ 4 | 94.7%  | 1.6%  | 90.2%  | 7.1%  |
| 0 ≤ EXT_XGB ≤ 1 | 92.1%  | 1.0%  | 79.3%  | 1.5%  |
| 0 ≤ EXT_XGB ≤ 2 | 98.0%  | 4.0%  | 94.3%  | 12.5% |
| 0 ≤ EXT_XGB ≤ 4 | 98.5%  | 6.4%  | 95.6%  | 19.2% |
| XGB_PRED > 0.906| 89.2%  | 0.9%  | 74.8%  | 1.1%  |
| XGB_PRED > 0.76 | 94.6%  | 1.2%  | 84.2%  | 2.2%  |
| XGB_PRED > 0.75 | 94.7%  | 1.3%  | 84.6%  | 2.2%  |

Note—The EXT_XGB classes were assigned to give a similar number of objects per class as EXT_MASH. The XGB_PRED cuts were tuned to give the same completeness as EXT_MASH on the specific evaluation data set used.

\[
\text{EXT_XGB} = (\text{XGB_PRED} < 0.865) + (\text{XGB_PRED} < 0.110) + (\text{XGB_PRED} < 0.045) + (\text{XGB_PRED} < 0.015) \quad (A5)
\]

A.3. Classifier performance

Table A.3 summarizes the integrated performance of the conventional and XGBoost star/galaxy classifiers as a function of magnitude and object class. We provide these performance metrics for two different samples of objects: (1) a relatively bright sample (17.5 < MAG_AUTO_I < 22.5) that is intended as a proxy for the galaxy samples used for large-scale structure cosmology analyses, and (2) a more expansive sample similar to what might be considered for more general astronomical analyses (16.5 < MAG_AUTO_I < 23.5). A direct comparison between the conventional EXT_MASH and XGBoost classifiers is not possible from this table since the two algorithms classes are not matched on efficiency or contamination for this specific sample of objects. However, studies have found that the XGBoost classifier outperforms the EXT_MASH classifier when cuts on XGB_PRED are set to match the EXT_MASH classes on either efficiency (e.g., lower contamination at fixed efficiency) or contamination (e.g., higher efficiency at fixed contamination).

B. MAIN CATALOG COLUMNS

In Table B.1 we summarize the essential columns of the Y6 Gold data set with their brief description. Full details will be provided upon release at https://des.ncsa.illinois.edu/releases.

C. SURVEY PROPERTY MAPS

Survey property maps are computed from a base mangle polygon file and converted to HEALPix maps as described in Appendix E of Sevilla-Noarbe et al. (2021).
In addition to these, certain survey property maps were also created using decasu which is meant to be a complete replacement for mangle mapping, running a high resolution pixelized map quickly and efficiently. This software natively uses healsparse formatted maps that are designed to store high resolution information without dramatically increasing the memory usage (therefore allowing to go beyond the limit of $\text{nside} = 4096$ imposed by standard RAM machine limitations). While mangle is better at describing the maps at the highest ("true") resolution, in practice we cannot make use of these maps without pixelizing and degrading them.

In Table C.1 we summarize the observing conditions per band. Figure C.1 and Figure C.2 show two example maps as a function of position in the sky and the corresponding histogram of computed values for these positions (computed in $\text{nside} = 4096$ HEALPix resolution). Note that the linear features along equal RA values are a consequence of the observation strategy to ensure a complete tiling of the sphere.

### C.1. Cirrus / Nebulosity Maps

Although the DES footprint avoids the Galactic plane, some regions are nonetheless affected by Galactic cirrus/nebulosity. These regions are being incorporated for the first time to the Gold suite of survey property maps with Y6 Gold.

Galactic cirrus manifests as faint diffuse light with surface brightness variations on scales between a few arcseconds and a few arcminutes. For comparison, background estimation using the AstrOmatic software (both SourceExtractor and SWarp) sampled a scale of $256 \times 256$ pixels ($\sim 67$ arcsec $\times 67$ arcsec) and therefore, unaccounted structured diffuse light on smaller angular scales can impact object detection and measurements. To better understand the extent of cirrus light, and potentially provide a means to quantify or mitigate its impact on source detection and measurement, we investigated the use of an existing machine learning application, MaxiMask$^{13}$ (Paillassa et al. 2020), that was trained on individual DECam observations to identify a number of different characteristics, with nebular/diffuse light being the one of interest here. For faint diffuse light, we find that the default training provides a good discriminant for the presence of this nebulosity for the DES Y6 coadded images, and even spatially binned coadded images.

To obtain a map of nebular light across the DES footprint, we performed the following steps for each of the 5 DES bands for every DES coadd tile:

1. Start with the DES coadd_nobkg image products that were assembled by SWarp without applying a background subtraction (i.e., $\text{--SUBTRACT_BACK N}$).

2. Bin each coadd image by calculating the median of the values in groups of $5 \times 5$ pixels.

---

$^{13}$ This work used https://github.com/mpaillassa/MaxiMask/ version 1.0.
Table B.1. Selected Y6 Gold catalog columns.

| Y6 Gold catalog column family | Units | Description |
|------------------------------|-------|-------------|
| COADD_OBJECT_ID             | Unique identifier for a Y6 coadd object. |
| TILENAME                    | Coadd tile to which the object belongs. See Morganson et al. (2018). |
| RA, DEC, GLAT, GLON         | Degrees | Equatorial and Galactic coordinates. |
| ALPHAWIN_J2000, DELTAWIN_J2000 | Degrees | Equatorial coordinates using a Gaussian-windowed measurement (for precise astrometry). |
| (BDF/MAG/FLUX),(GRIZY)      | Magnitudes | Photometry as measured by the fitvd algorithm, both for Bulge and Disk model or a Gaussian aperture fit. |
| PSF_MAG/FLUX,APER8,(GRIZY)  | Magnitudes | PSF photometry as measured by the fitvd algorithm, in APER8 system. |
| (BDF/GAP),(MAG/FLUX),(ERR),(GRIZY) | Magnitudes | Estimated error for the BDF/GAP_MAG/FLUX. |
| BDF_FLUX_COV,(1-5),(1-5)    | Counts per s | Elements of the 5 x 5 flux covariance matrix for the BDF fit. |
| PSF_MAG/FLUX,APER8,(GRIZY)  | Magnitudes | Estimated error to PSF_MAG/FLUX,APER8. |
| (BDF/GAP),(MAG/FLUX),(GRIZY) | Magnitudes | FLUX corrected for interstellar extinction (i.e. de-reddened; top of Galaxy) and PSF aperture ratio (APER8 system). |
| PSF_MAG/APER8,(GRIZY)       | Magnitudes | PSF aperture ratio (APER8 system). Recommended for point-source studies. |
| A_FIDUCIAL (GRIZY)          | Magnitudes | SED-independent interstellar extinction based on the E(B-V) reddening map of Schlegel et al. (1998, SFD98). |
| BDF_T                        | arcsec² | Intrinsic squared size of best-fit BDF model, before PSF convolution: $T = \langle x^2 \rangle + \langle y^2 \rangle$. |
| BDF_T_ERR                    | arcsec² | Estimate of error in BDF_T. |
| BDF_T_RATIO                  | Ratio of BDF_T of the object to PSF_T at the location of the object (stars are near zero). |
| BDF_FRACTDEV                | Fraction of light in a bulge (Sersic n = 4 model). |
| BDF_FRACTDEV                | BDF ellipticity components. |
| EXT_(COADD/FITVD/MASH/WAVG/XGB) | Classification code for the 'extendedness' of object, from 0 (point-like) to 4 (extended-like). See Section 4.2. |
| XGB_PRED                     | Predictor output from the XGBoost star/galaxy classifier. Galaxies have XGB_PRED ~ 0 and stars have XGB_PRED ~ 1. See Section 4.2. |
| FLAGS_FOOTPRINT             | Flag indicating that the object belongs to Y6 Gold. See Section 5.1. |
| FLAGS_GOLD                  | Flag showing possible processing issues with the object. See Section 4.3. |
| FLAGS_FOREGROUND            | Flag showing that the object is in the area of influence of a foreground object from an imaging point of view. See Section 5.2. |
| DNF_(ZZZN)                  | DNF photo-z estimate for the object, using DNF_NNEIGHBORS or the nearest neighbor. See Section 4.4. |
| DNF_ZSIGMA                  | DNF photo-z uncertainty estimate from photometric uncertainties and residuals from the neighborhood fit. |
| DNF_NNEIGHBORS              | Number of neighbors used for the DNF_Z estimate. |
| DNF_ZERR_PARAM              | The uncertainty on DNF_Z due to photometric errors. |
| DNF_ZERR_FIT                | The uncertainty on DNF_Z from the residuals of the fit. |

**Note:** Names in parentheses show options for a given type of column separated by slashes for each column. Full details at https://des.ncsa.illinois.edu/releases.

3. Run MaxiMask to obtain a probability-like estimate, $\zeta$, that the flux detected in each binned pixel is consistent with a diffuse/nebular origin.

4. Map each binned pixel onto HEALPix grids with $nside = 1024$ and 4096 (NESTED) and then accumulate statistics within each HEALPix element to form maps of median and maximum values of $\zeta$, as well as the median and maximum surface brightness.

The resulting maps of max($\zeta$) in the gri-bands show good correspondence to maps of extinction and to HI surveys when constrained to high velocities (i.e., Galactic cirrus). At longer wavelengths (zY-bands) the detection of diffuse nebulosity is less significant and the correspondence to the extinction and HI maps is less pronounced.

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Figure C.1. Sky maps and histograms of the seeing (fwhm_wmean) for each of the observed bands. The value at each location is the inverse-sky-variance-weighted sum of all individual exposures of that HEALPix pixel.

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Figure C.2. Sky maps and histograms for the magnitude limit (maglim_wmean) estimated from the weight maps. Note that the linear features along equal RA values are a result from regions covered by more than 10 exposures per band, which are inevitable when attempting to tile the sphere with no less than 10 exposures per location.

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### Table C.1. Y6 Gold Survey Properties.

| DES map name (from `mangle`) | Units | Description |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------------|
| NUMIMAGE                      |       | Number of images |
| MAGLIM                        |       | Magnitude limit estimated from the weight maps ¹ |
| FRACDET                       |       | Effective area fraction considering the bleed-trail and bright star masks |
| EXPTIME.SUM                   | seconds | Exposure time |
| T_EFF.(WMEAN/MAX/MIN)         |       | Figure of merit for quality of observations t_eff ² |
| T_EFF_EXPTIME.SUM             | seconds | Exposure time multiplied by t_eff |
| SKYBRITE WMEAN                | electrons/CCD pixel | Sky brightness from the sky background model ³ |
| SKYVAR.(WMEAN/MIN/MAX)        | (electrons/CCD pixel)² | Variance on the sky brightness ² |
| SKYVAR_SQRT.WMEAN             | electrons/CCD pixel | Square root of sky variance |
| SKYVAR_UNCERTAINTY           | electrons/CCD pixel | Sky variance with flux scaled by zero point |
| SIGMA_MAG.ZERO.QSUM          | mag  | Quadrature sum of zero-point uncertainties. |
| FWHM.(WMEAN/MIN/MAX)          | arcsec | Average FWHM of the 2D elliptical Moffat function that fits best the PSF model from PSFEx |
| FWHM_FLUXRAD.(WMEAN/MIN/MAX)  | arcsec | Twice the average half-light radius from the sources used for determining the PSF with PSFEx |
| FGCM_GRY.(WMEAN/MIN/MAX)      | mag  | Residual ‘grey’ corrections to the zeropoint from FGCM |
| AIRMASS.(WMEAN/MIN/MAX)       |       | Secant of the zenith angle |
| CIRRUS_NEB.(MEAN/MAX)         |       | Mean or maximum probability of nebular emission |
| CIRRUS_SB.(MEAN/MAX)          |       | Mean surface brightness in image pixels (relative values) |

| DES map name (from `decasu`) | Units | Description |
|------------------------------|-------|-------------|
| airmass_wmean                |       | Secant of the zenith angle |
| fwhm_wmean                   | pixels | Average FWHM of the 2D elliptical Moffat function fit to the PSFEx model (0.263 arcsec/pix) |
| maglim_wmean                 | mag   | Magnitude limit estimated from the weight maps |
| nexp_sum                     |       | Number of exposures |
| exptime_sum                  | seconds | Exposure time |
| skybrite_wmean(scaled)⁴     | electrons/CCD pixel | Sky brightness from the sky background model |
| skysigma_wmean(scaled)⁴     | electrons/CCD pixel | Square root of sky variance |
| dcr_(dra/ddec/e1/e2)_wmean  |       | Differential chromatic refraction effect on positions and ellipticity (relative shifts) |
| bfld_nside(4096/16384)(nodered)_depth | mag | Magnitude limit, using raw or dereddened magnitudes, in nside=4096/16384 HEALPix resolution |

**Note:** Survey properties in Y6 Gold registered as maps. Each quantity has been calculated individually for grizY bands.

- These maps are produced in HEALPix format in nside = 4096 in NESTED ordering, averaging from a higher resolution version (nside = 32768). Each high resolution pixel adopts the value of the molygon from the mangle map at its center, which is a statistic of a stack of images contributing to that point in the sky. WMEAN quantities are the mean value weighted using the weights obtained from `mangle`. MIN, MAX correspond to the minimum or maximum of all the stacked images in the molygon. SUM adds up the contribution of all images to the molygon. QSUM makes a quadrature sum instead. The DES map name is the name given to the files as they are delivered in the release page.

- These maps are produced in healspars format, with weighted means unless indicated otherwise.

- 10-σ magnitude limit in 2 arcsec diameter apertures.

- t_eff, as described in Morganson et al. (2018), Equation 4, is measured as a ratio between exposure time and the exposure time necessary to achieve the same signal-to-noise for point sources observed in nominal conditions. This depends on a set of fiducial conditions per band for full-width half maximum, sky background and atmospheric transmission.

- The model value used is taken as the median per CCD. Details for this model are described in Bernstein et al. (2017) and Morganson et al. (2018).

- Takes into account intrinsic sky Poisson noise, read noise and flat field variance.

- Scaled quantities indicate that the electron/pixel values have been scaled according to the zeropoints of the coadds.

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