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NGC 6266 (or M62) and NGC 7099 (or M30): Two globular star clusters in our Galaxy at distances of 20,000 and 30,000 light years from Earth, respectively.

Credit: NGC 6266: NASA/CXC/MIT/D.Pooley et al.; NGC 7099: NASA/CXC/UIIn/H.Cohn & P.Lugger et al.

Most of the point-like X-ray sources in these Chandra images are binary star systems containing a collapsed star, such as a neutron star or a white dwarf star, that is pulling matter off a normal companion star. A globular cluster is a spherical collection of hundreds of thousands or even millions of stars buzzing around each other in a gravitationally bound stellar beehive that is about a hundred light years in diameter. While direct, head-on collisions between stars are rare even in these crowded conditions, close encounters are frequent and can lead to the formation of X-ray emitting binary star systems.

Scale: Each image is approx. 1.9 arcmin on a side.

Chandra X-ray Observatory ACIS Image

CXC operated for NASA by the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory