



ETA CARINAE

This composite image of Eta Carinae from NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory (yellow) and Hubble Space Telescope (blue) shows the remnants of an eruption from the star during the 1840s. Eta Carinae is a mysterious, extremely bright and massive star located 7,500 light years from Earth. For the moment, Eta Carinae is at a point of unstable equilibrium where the star's gravity is almost overcoming the outward pressure from nuclear fusion. The star is thought to be consuming its nuclear fuel at an incredible rate, and other observations suggest that it could explode at any time. When it does explode, it will perhaps rival the moon in brilliance as seen from Earth.

JUNE 2008

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