



Stellar Demise: NGC 6302

What resemble dainty butterfly wings are actually roiling cauldrons of gas heated to more than 36,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The gas is tearing across space at more than 600,000 miles an hour – fast enough to travel from Earth to the Moon in 24 minutes!

A dying star that was once about five times the mass of the Sun is at the center of this fury. It ejected its envelope of gases and is now unleashing a stream of ultraviolet radiation that causes the cast-off material to glow. This object is an example of a planetary nebula. The name arose 200 years ago when astronomers looking through crude telescopes thought the objects resembled planets.

Hubble Space Telescope – Wide Field Camera 3
NASA, ESA, and the Hubble SM4 ERO Team