



Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics

“Hypergiant”: Fascinating scientists since 1946.

Dying star’s huge eruptions analyzed

Tremendous eruptions are occurring on a bright star in the nighttime sky, astronomers say. Located in the constellation Cassiopeia, the “hypergiant” star Rho Cassiopeiae lost mass almost equal to 10,000 times the weight of Earth during one tremendous outburst in 2000, astronomers at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics say. Visible to the naked eye and many times larger than Earth’s sun, Rho Cassiopeiae has intrigued scientists since 1946. Only a dozen such hypergiants are known, and scientists suspect that Rho Cassiopeiae will soon destroy itself in a supernova explosion. The scientists are hoping to determine what triggers such eruptions before the stars die.

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