



RCW 86

A supernova at the location in the sky of RCW 86 was witnessed by Chinese astronomers in 185 A.D.. Data from four space telescopes were combined to determine the type of stellar explosion that produced the supernova remnant RCW 86. X-ray data from Chandra and XMM-Newton (blue and green) showed that the remnant contains a large amount of iron, pointing toward the explosion of a white dwarf star that became unstable, and infrared data from Spitzer and WISE (yellow and red) showed that the star exploded in a nearly empty region of space, accounting for the large diameter (85 light years) of the remnant.

August 2013

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