



X-RAYS FROM
NASA'S CHANDRA



OPTICAL DATA
FROM NASA'S HUBBLE

CAT'S EYE

The Cat's Eye, officially known as NGC 6543, is a so-called planetary nebula, a glowing shell of gas and dust that forms when Sun-like stars die.

Planetary nebulas actually have nothing to do with planets—the name was coined hundreds of years ago because these objects looked like planets through small optical telescopes. Rather, a planetary nebula is a stage of life that our Sun will experience billions of years from now.

The Cat's Eye is found 3,000 light years from Earth in the middle of the constellation Draco, which is Latin for "dragon." Draco is found high in the northern sky.

More at: <http://chandra.harvard.edu>

Stars like the Sun live for billions of years, but their phase as a planetary nebula lasts only a few hundred thousand years.

The spectacular filamentary structures in planetary nebulas come from the outer layers that have been shed by the dying star then sculpted by intense radiation from the hot central star (bright white dot in middle) that will eventually become a white dwarf.

