

Image: Hubble hones in on a hypergiant's home

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This Hubble image reveals a young super star cluster known as Westerlund 1,

only 15,000 light-years away in our Milky Way neighborhood, yet home to one of the largest stars ever discovered. Credit: ESA/Hubble & NASA

This beautiful Hubble image reveals a young super star cluster known as Westerlund 1, only 15,000 light-years away in our Milky Way neighborhood, yet home to one of the largest stars ever discovered.

Stars are classified according to their spectral type, surface temperature, and luminosity. While studying and classifying the cluster's constituent stars, astronomers discovered that Westerlund 1 is home to an enormous star. Originally named Westerlund 1-26, this monster star is a red supergiant (although sometimes classified as a hypergiant) with a radius over 1,500 times that of our sun. If Westerlund 1-26 were placed where our sun is in our solar system, it would extend out beyond the orbit of Jupiter.

Most of Westerlund 1's [stars](#) are thought to have formed in the same burst of activity, meaning that they have similar ages and compositions. The cluster is relatively young in astronomical terms —at around three million years old it is a baby compared to our own sun, which is some 4.6 billion years old.

Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

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