

# **Butterfly emerges from stellar death in planetary nebula**

**A dying star that was once five times the mass of the Sun created this delicate butterfly shape. Called the Butterfly Nebula, the object is an example of a planetary nebula, so-named because many of them have a round appearance resembling that of a planet when viewed through a small telescope.**

**The Hubble Space Telescope snapshot was one of the first images taken after the May 2009 servicing mission to upgrade the Earth-orbiting observatory.**

**The star formed the nebula by slowly ejecting its layer of gases over about 2,200 years. It is now unleashing a stream of ultraviolet radiation that is making the ejected material glow. The “butterfly” stretches for more than two light-years, which is about half the distance from the Sun to the nearest star, Alpha Centauri. The central star is hidden within a doughnut-shaped ring of dust, which appears as a dark band pinching the nebula in the center.**

**The Butterfly Nebula, catalogued as NGC 6302, lies within our Milky Way galaxy, roughly 3,800 light-years away in the constellation Scorpius.**

**For more information on Tactile Astronomy projects from the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, Maryland, go to the following page at the Web site, Amazing Space: <http://amazing-space.stsci.edu/tactile-astronomy>**