

# Mira Ceti

star

Alternate titles: *Mira*, *Omicron Ceti*



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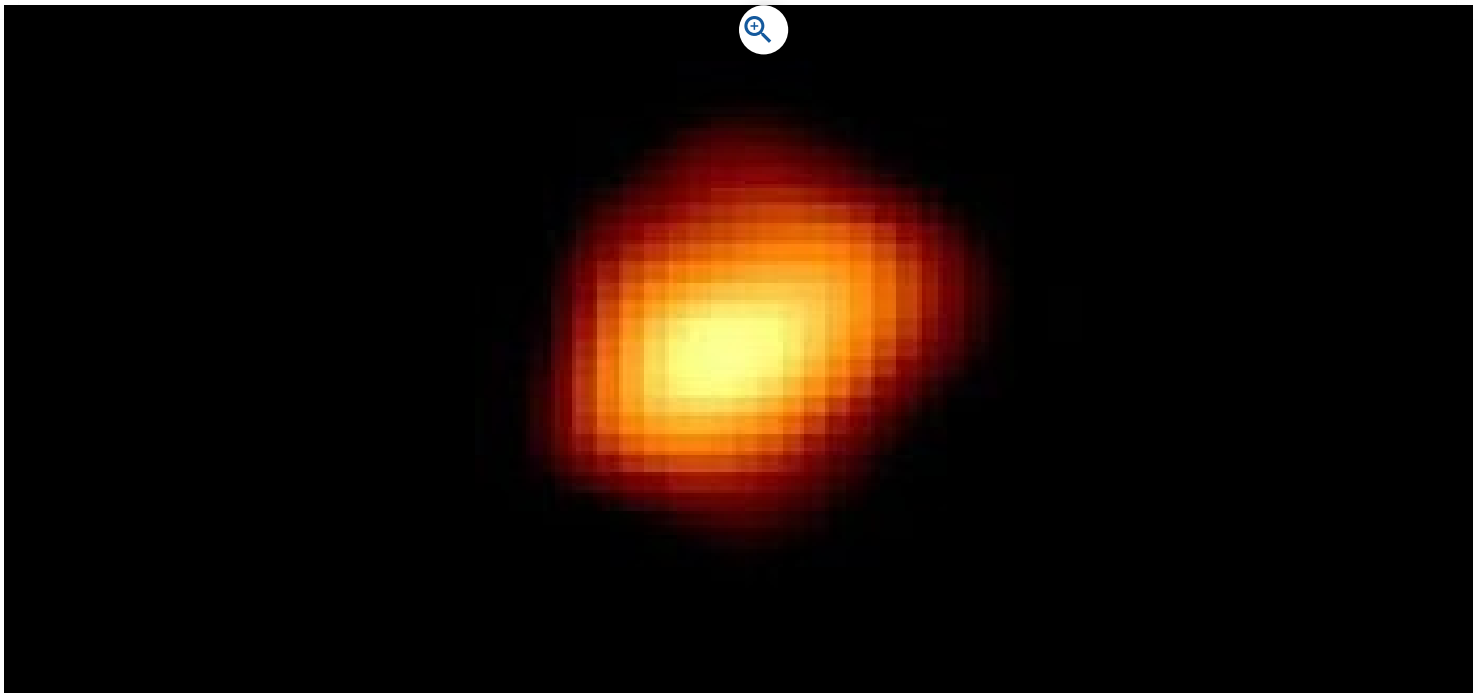
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**Mira Ceti**, also called **Omicron Ceti**, first [variable star](#) (apart from [novae](#)) to be discovered, lying in the southern [constellation Cetus](#), and the [prototype](#) of a class known as long-period variables, or Mira stars. There is some evidence that ancient Babylonian astronomers noticed its variable character. In a systematic study in 1638, a Dutch astronomer, Phocylides Holwarda, found that the star disappeared and reappeared in a varying cycle of about 330 days. It thus acquired the name Mira (from Latin: “Miraculous”). Its brightness varies from cycle to cycle, but generally it is about [magnitude 3](#) at maximum light and magnitude 9 at minimum. Mira is a binary; the red giant primary has a faint bluish white companion. In 2006 the ultraviolet [satellite observatory](#) Galaxy Evolution Explorer discovered that Mira had shed material into a cometary tail 13 [light-years](#) in length. Mira is about 350 light-years from [Earth](#).



## Mira Ceti

Mira Ceti, as seen by the Hubble Space Telescope.

Image: Margarita Karovska (Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics) and NASA

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