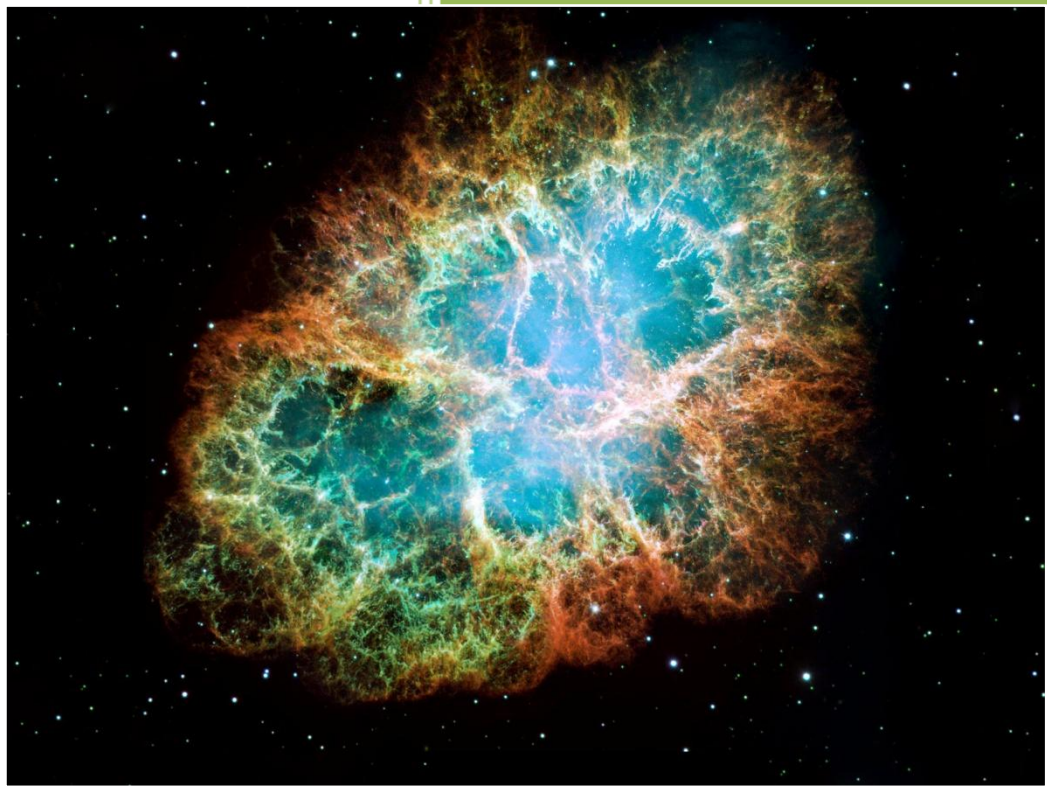


2014

My interest in astronomy



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Edinburgh

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My name is Michael Polowyj. I live in Edinburgh and I have had reading and writing difficulty all my life. I am now 52 years old, and with the help of Lorrane (from the WEA) who has been helping me with my difficulties at work, I have gained the confidence to write about my interest in astronomy. And I hope that I can let others know that with the help and understanding of others you can achieve your goals.

To my tutor Lorrane without whom I would not have the abundance of confidence to even try to write this.

Lorrane works for the WEA in Edinburgh. The WEA offer workplace learning to a range of employers and staff across Edinburgh.

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My interest in astronomy

I became interested in astronomy at the age of 8 I watched the first moon landing on a black and white TV, and I remember looking up at the moon the next night and thinking there are men up there.

I was hooked I like astronomy because of the wonder of it all, the millions of stars out there, some of them thousands of light years away.

If you look up at the night sky you would think you will see millions of stars, but the human eye can only pick out about 2 to 3 thousand of the brightest ones even on the clearest night.

Our galaxy holds about 400 billion other suns; it is 100 light years across and about 60 thousand light years thick.

Our star the sun sits about 40 thousand light years out from the galactic centre, at the edge of the Orion spiral arm and 150 light years from the galactic plane.

I have learned about astronomy from books magazines and the sky at night on the TV.

I have a small 60 mm refracting telescope which I've had since about 17 years of age, its magnification range is from X57 to X 250.

I enjoy watching the planets Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn with its rings, although my telescope is too small to see Uranus and Neptune.

My favourite object in the sky is the moon, when you look at the moon through a telescope it is an amazing sight with the mountains craters and valleys.

I can also see a fuzzy patch which is the Andromeda galaxy much larger than ours and is coming towards our galaxy at around 1000 miles a second and will collide with our galaxy in around 4 billion years time.

When you look at the stars they are just pin points of light but are different colours, there are blue super giants, blue giants, orange giants, yellow dwarfs, red giants and red dwarfs, our sun is a yellow dwarf and is about 5 billion years old.

Astronomers have since 1999 discovered about 350 extra solar planets “planets not in our solar system” some of them are thousands of light years away, but there is at least one which is nearby orbiting a star in the Alpha Centauri system which is only 4 light years away just next door.

I often wonder when I look at other stars. if someone is looking up at their sky on their own world, wondering if there is life out there somewhere in the universe.

