



## Space Pirates Dig Up Cosmic Booty



Astronomers could be called the pirates of the sky; they explore new worlds and search for valuable information as loot. This new picture shows the kind of haul all space-pirates dream of – a treasure chest full of cosmic gems!

This corner of the Universe is brimming with astronomical riches, including star clusters, cosmic clouds and stellar nurseries.

The jewels shining at the very heart of this image are 30 blisteringly bright, blue stars. Each of these stars shines 100 000 times brighter than the Sun and is up to 50 times more massive!

The central two stars are the biggest and brightest prizes. Together the giant stars are bright enough to light up the surrounding clouds. This includes the Rim Nebula that we can see in orange and black on the right-hand side of the image.

The Rim Nebula creates a wall of dark and bright clouds that marks the boundary of a stellar nursery. Stellar nurseries are clouds mostly made up of chemical called hydrogen, which is the main ingredient for making stars. This is where new stars are born.

As the cloud creates new stars, they are destroying their birth place. The stars' dazzlingly bright light, along with violent supernova explosions, blow away most of the material. In fact, 90% of the material will go to waste!

The naughty behaviour of the young stars means that this stellar nursery will only last a few million years. That's not very long when you consider that its stars could live for many billions of years!

### COOL FACT

This spectacular photograph of space took 56 hours to capture. It's made up of a mosaic of 500 separate pictures!



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