

The California Nebula, NGC1499

This is NGC1499, otherwise known as the California Nebula because of its resemblance to the state. It's located about 1,500 light years distant in the Constellation Perseus. It is quite large, some 60 light years across, if much brighter it would visually span an area in the sky equal to 5 full moons. The massive star, Menkib, seen to the right of the nebula ionizes the hydrogen atoms in the nebula, giving it the characteristic red color of an emission nebula. Menkib is a giant type O star, some 30 times the mass of our Sun and over 12,000 times brighter. Large, massive stars like Menkib live short lives and it will likely supernova within the next million years; a black hole will be the end result of massive stars like Menkib.

The image is the result of 132 separate 3-minute exposures taken over 2 nights at my home that have been stacked together and processed in PixInsight software. I used a small refractor, just 250 mm focal length and a full frame OSC dedicated astronomy camera. I cropped the image quite a bit to highlight the nebula better.

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