



Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/P.S. Teixeira (Center for Astrophysics).

December 2008



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	CHRISTMAS		

Christmas Tree Cluster

Infant stars are revealed for the first time in this image of a region known as the Christmas Tree Cluster. The image is a composite from Spitzer's infrared array camera and multi-band imaging photometer. The newborn stars show as pink and red specks. They appear to have formed at regularly spaced intervals in a shape resembling a snowflake. Hence, astronomers have nicknamed this group of young stars the "Snowflake Cluster."

Scientists believe these are newborn stars, still clustered in the linear pattern in which they formed. At a mere 100,000 years old, these stars have yet to "crawl" away from their location of birth. Over time, each star will drift away, and the snowflake will be no more. While most of the visible-light stars (right) that give the Christmas Tree Cluster its name and shape do not shine brightly in Spitzer's infrared eyes, all of the stars forming from this dusty cloud are considered part of the cluster.

The Spitzer image also shows organic molecules as wisps of green. The larger yellowish dots are massive young stars. The blue dots are older Milky Way stars at various distances.



Credit: California Institute of Technology Digitized Sky Survey.

