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The black hole, dubbed LB-1, was spotted by researchers from the National Astronomical Observatory of China. Located 15,000 light-years from Earth, the black hole has an enormous mass 70 times greater than the sun.

Professor Liu Jifeng, who led the study, said: "Black holes of such mass should not even exist in our Galaxy, according to most of the current models of stellar evolution.

"We thought that very massive stars with the chemical composition typical of our Galaxy must shed most of their gas in powerful stellar winds, as they approach the end of their life.

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