Crab Nebula Variations in Hard X-rays

Colleen A. Wilson-Hodge
(NASA/MSFC)
Collaborators


MAXI data from http://maxi.riken.jp
• Light curves for each instrument are normalized to its average rate from MJD 54690-54790.
• RXTE/PCU2 - Black
• BAT - Red
• IBIS/ISGRI - Green
• JEM X2 - orange
• SPI - Light blue
• GBM - Blue squares
• Instruments on four separate spacecraft show ~7% decline in Crab (nebula+pulsar) flux from summer 2008 to summer 2010.

Crab PCU2 Spectra

- Each Individual observation fitted
- PCU2 layer 2&3 data
- Absorbed Power-law
- $N_h$ fixed $0.97 \times 10^{22}$ cm$^{-2}$
- Increase in spectral index
RXTE PCA Spectra

- Averaged fit results in 100-day bins
- Colors denote “rising”, “declining” and “flat” intervals.
- Photon index softens from 2.15 to 2.17 during 2008-2010 flux decline
- 8-sigma effect
Comparing “rising”, “declining”, and “flat” flux intervals

- Photon index softened from 2.14 to 2.17
- Softening occurring in declining phases
- Hardening during initial rise
- Similar results in PCU 3 & 4
Evidence for Softening in Swift/BAT

- Color scheme matches RXTE Softening during 2008-2010 decline
- Earlier intervals consistent with constant hardness
- Hardness ratios 14-50 keV/50-100 keV BAT 58-month survey data
- 50-day averages
RXTE Mission-long Light Curves

- Very active period 2001-2010
- December 2011 flux is at or below level before 2001.
- Larger variations in 15-50 keV band
- 3 PCUs, layers 2&3
- Count rates corrected for dead time and response
Recent Data 2008-2012

<15 keV

15-50 keV

Time (MJD)
20-year Crab Nebula Light Curve

15-50 keV

50-100 keV
Summary & Conclusions

- The Crab Nebula was surprisingly variable from 2001-2010, with less variability before 2001 and since mid-2010.
- We presented evidence for spectral softening from RXTE, Swift/BAT, and Fermi GBM during the mid-2008-2010 flux decline.
- We see no clear connections between the hard X-ray variations and the GeV flares.