

AM CVN STARS

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AM CVn stars are hydrogen-deficient accreting binaries characterised by extremely short orbital periods (10 to 65 mins) and accretion discs dominated by helium. As a class they are predicted to be one of the strongest sources of gravitational waves for the Laser Interferometer Space Antenna (*LISA*). We now know of 18 AM CVn systems (out of perhaps 300,000 in the Galaxy), more than half of them discovered within the last 5 years, including the first eclipsing system. There has been a corresponding advance in theoretical understanding so that we now have a consistent framework within which to understand these systems. I will review these advances, discussing the spectroscopic and photometric properties of AM CVn stars as well as their evolution, drawing attention to areas of current uncertainty.