

Mineral Spotlight: Skutterudite

We are kicking off our summer museum hours by highlighting this metallic mineral with an iridescent sheen. Skutterudite is a cobalt-rich mineral with the general formula CoAs_3 . The mineral is heavy and emits a garlicky odor when heated. It is an important cobalt ore, which is used most abundantly in rechargeable batteries. Industrially, skutterudite has great potential in thermoelectric power generation technology because of its conductivity.

It is formed in hydrothermal settings. In this environment, skutterudite can be hydrated into masses of small radiating crystals of pink erythrite or apple-green annabergite.

Skutterudite is named after Skutterud, Norway, where it was first described in 1845. Colloquially it is often called smaltite because of its historic use in creating smalt. Smalt is a cobalt-glass, colored deep blue, which was used in paint in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. It was especially used by Dutch and Flemish artists, including Johannes Vermeer in some of his earlier works.



This feature was posted on Dice Museum social media by Museum intern Josian Aardema on 5/9/2023.