

formation of IUPAC a few years later). In addition, we could celebrate the contributions of women to chemistry by recognizing the 100th anniversary of Marie Curie's Nobel Prize in chemistry.

I asked the Committee on Chemistry Education to oversee a process whereby we understood the procedures for the declaration of an international year and to carry through with our application. They did a marvelous job enlisting UNESCO support and mounting a campaign that ultimately led to the UN declaration. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to all those who were involved.

Of course, many other things occurred, but from my point of view these were the highlights. My great-

est joy and satisfaction came from interacting with the members of the IUPAC community. In particular, my colleagues on the Executive Committee are a dedicated and inspirational group. They are a great pleasure to work with as are the hard working members of the IUPAC Secretariat. My very heartfelt thanks and gratitude to you all. 🌐

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See also www.iupac.org/publications/ci/indexes/stamps.html

Stamps International

Merry Christmas Phosphates

Phosphate rock, a combination of phosphate-rich minerals that includes several types of apatites, is the only economically viable source of phosphorus for the production of phosphate fertilizers and a myriad of other phosphorus-containing products.

Although not widely distributed in nature, it is mined on a huge scale in certain regions of the world. About three-quarters of the world's production, a whopping 167 million tonnes in 2008, comes from only four countries, namely the United States, China, Morocco, and Russia. On the other hand, Christmas Island, a small territory located in the Indian Ocean about 360 km south of Java (Indonesia) but administered by Australia since 1958, is one of the most peculiar if not particularly large exporters of phosphate rock, mainly because its economy has relied almost exclusively on its exploitation for over a century.

The first stamp illustrated in this note is part of a set of 16 issued by Christmas Island in 1980-81 to promote its phosphate industry. It shows a long line of volumetric flasks and a woman analyzing samples of phos-



phosphate rock, presumably to establish their phosphorus content (usually reported as P_2O_5). The other stamp, issued in 1988 to commemorate the centenary of the first permanent settlement on the island by the British, features the traditional way of mining phosphate rock. Interestingly, even though the annual output of phosphate rock on Christmas Island has remained steady in recent years at about 650 000 tonnes, the local economy has significantly shifted towards tourism, with a focus on nature walking, scuba diving, and bird watching. So, on 25 December, if the holiday season finds you longing for a trip to a paradisiacal island with a long history of phosphate mining, you know where to go . . .

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