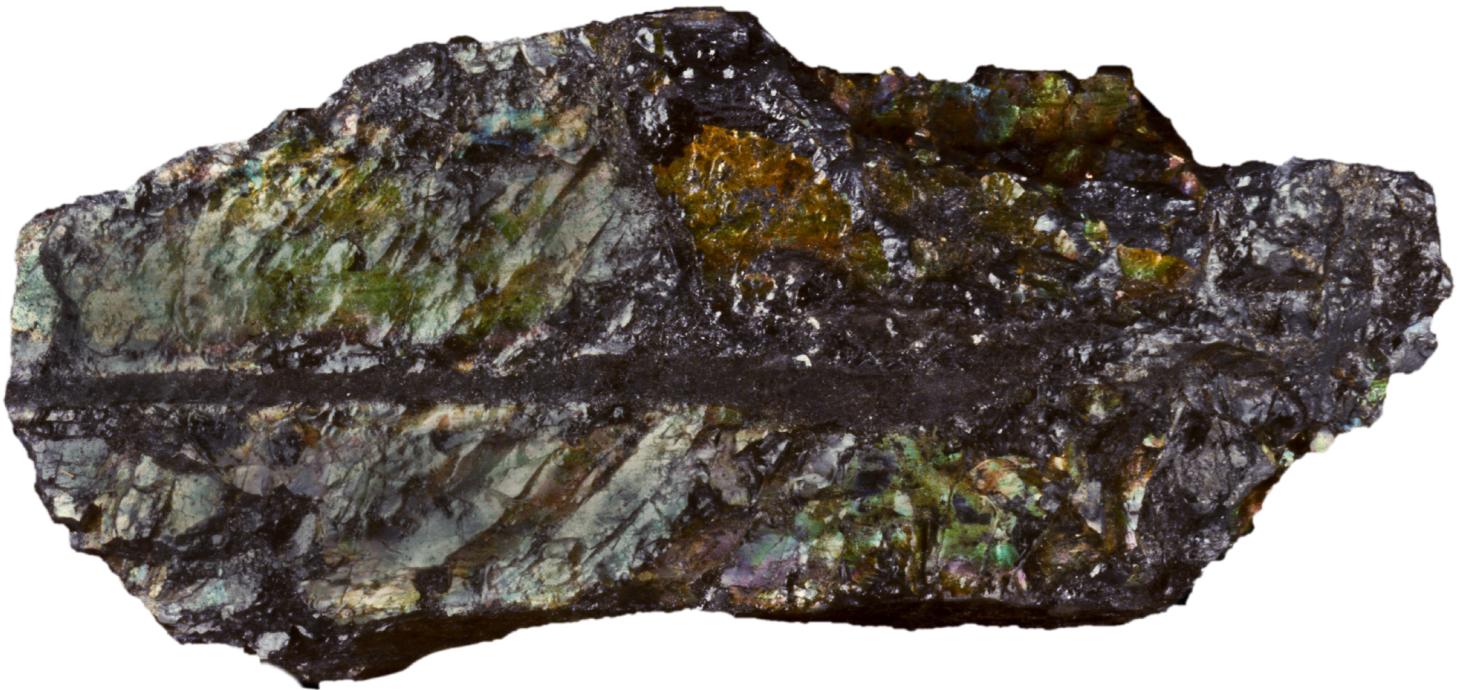


Peacock Coal



Not all coal is black. Although nearly all of Indiana's bituminous coal reserves (17 billion tons) are black or dark gray, there are beautiful exceptions. Miners occasionally find coal streaked with iridescent blues and reds. Such coal has aptly been called "peacock coal" because the colors resemble those of a peacock's tail plumage.

Peacock coal is not a distinct variety. The color is a surface effect that usually does not last long

after the coal is exposed. A thin film of material that refracts light causes the rainbow of color just as a thin film of oil on water causes iridescence. The film causing peacock coal's colors is usually iron oxide deposited in fine cracks and pores in the coal by percolating groundwater. A film of oil or sulfur dioxide may also produce this effect. Longer-lasting effects are related to the oxidation of sulfides in the coal.