

2021 Annual Report of the Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature (WGPSN)

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Report for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021

From 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021, 74 new names have been assigned for planetary surface features (Mercury: 5, the Moon: 15, Mars: 37, Pluto: 12, Arrokoth: 3, Nix: 2).

- Twenty names were approved for features in the vicinity of the Tianwen-1 landing site.
- The first set of 5 names was approved for the newly imaged bodies Arrokoth and Nix.

During this same time period the following additional actions have been taken:

- The WGPSN has fielded several proposals to rename features that bear the names of persons whose political or social beliefs were, by today's standards, racist or sexist. The WGPSN discussed this issue at length and has publicized its policy on this by adding a new Q&A to the Frequently Asked Questions page on Gazetteer of Planetary Nomenclature website on 10 May 2021:
 - Q: If a surface feature is named after a person who later turns out to have a darker side to their character, can that feature be renamed after somebody else?
 - A: The IAU does not name any planetary surface features, satellites or rings to commemorate people. If a person's name is used, it was chosen because of scientific need, and to fit the theme that was defined for naming that type of landmark. The IAU avoids changing any planetary names because there are publications as well as old maps and globes with those names, and it causes confusion in the literature and research to change them. Therefore, we only recommend changing a name if absolutely and demonstratively required.
- The WGPSN has approved the following feature names for women scientists: Roemer, Margulis, Stose, Marvin, and Ride Rupes, and the following names for people of color: Coleman Mons, Easley, and Henson.

Rita Schulz
Working Group Chair