

**Title:** Proposal for New Emoji: RACCOON FACE

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Created by Pascual Redondo. Free for use and distribution by the Unicode Consortium<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

This request is for a racoon emoji. It would represent an animal that has multicultural symbolism and other metaphorical uses, ranging from legends as a trickster figure, to the household encounters of it being synonymous with trash. The racoon, when used as a stand-in for the tanuki (translated as 'raccoon dog') in Japanese culture, also has a larger worldwide significance, and would help towards completeness of representations of animals from Asia in the animal category. Emoticons that feature raccoons and exist already, such as stickers developed by Facebook and in mobile apps, suggest the level of interest in a raccoon emoji.

### **Introduction**

The raccoon was recently featured in an episode of Planet Earth II as an example of an animal that has a noticeable ability to adapt to the increasing urbanization of our planet and growth of cities.<sup>2</sup> Its increased presence in American towns and

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<sup>1</sup> "Raccoon Emoji": <https://dribbble.com/shots/2084154-Raccoon-Emoji>

<sup>2</sup> "City Rascals - Raccoon bandits and cheeky macaques":

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/562HWqsjf52RwRGhyLjff0t/city-rascals-raccoon-bandits-and-cheeky-macaques>

cities has led to its association in American culture to ‘troublemaker’ and ‘trash,’ and yet its adaptability is part of this animal’s intelligence, which is also recognized in more cultures such as Native American and Japanese ones.

It is known as a trickster in Native American culture, and its visually-similar counterpart, the tanuki, is seen as “mischievous and jolly” in Japanese culture.<sup>3</sup> Rather than propose creating two separate emojis, one for the raccoon and one for the tanuki, I am proposing that because the tanuki is facially visually similar to the raccoon, a RACCOON FACE emoji could have this dual meaning, and be used for both animals and their symbolic meanings.

### **1. Identification**

- A. CLDR short name: Raccoon face
- B. CLDR keywords: Raccoon | face

### **2. Images**

The image included with this proposal was created by Pascual Redondo, and is free for use and distribution by the Unicode consortium.

### **3. Selection Factors — Inclusion**

#### **A. Compatibility**

A form of the raccoon emoji has been used on Twitter before, by the movie theater chain Regal Cinemas to promote the *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* movie in 2017. One of the main characters is a raccoon, and had a raccoon emoji created for it (Fig. 1). Since this emoji was a limited-time feature, it no longer appears on the platform even in tweets that it was used in, so the relative frequency of usage cannot be calculated at this time. The proposed RACCOON FACE emoji, however, is separate from the Rocket Raccoon one, because its colouring – black and grey – portrays the actual living animal than this fictional character, which has brown fur instead, so RACCOON FACE will not be referring to a specific character or brand.

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<sup>3</sup> “Japanese Raccoon Dog”: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese\\_raccoon\\_dog](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_raccoon_dog)



**Figure 1:** The raccoon emoji created for use on Twitter<sup>4</sup>

**B. Expected usage level**

1. Frequency

Compared to some existing emojis that depict animals that live in the wild but foray into urban dwellings and can also cause a nuisance, the expected usage level for a raccoon emoji ranges from 110% to 36% depending on the animal of comparison. Using Google Trends comparisons for searches conducted worldwide in the last five years, I compared the following animals, with the raccoon as the numerator in each case:

	<b>Hedgehog</b>	<b>Fox</b>	<b>Mouse</b>	<b>Rat</b>
<b>Raccoon</b>	1.1	0.5	0.37	0.36

For an emoji comparison based on online activity and interest in the animal, I chose HEDGEHOG, because it has a similar online presence with raccoons: both are animals that have videos, gifs, and photos of them posted to animal blogs, and the hedgehog did not have an emoji until this year’s Unicode Version 10.0. The Google Trends comparison between ‘raccoon emoji’ and ‘hedgehog emoji’ is 72%. On

<sup>4</sup> “Guardians of the Galaxy 2 Gets Twitter Emoji”: <http://screenrant.com/guardians-galaxy-2-emojis-characters/>

emojiXpress, the hedgehog emoji was requested 14,291 times.<sup>5</sup> We could estimate, although not conclusively, then, that the number of requests for a raccoon emoji would be 72% of the number of hedgehog emoji requests: 10,289.

## 2. Multiple usages

The metaphorical references for the raccoon relate to its nocturnal behavior of being seen in neighborhoods going through garbage. Across American cities, the animal is considered a nuisance in pest control divisions. It can be associated with trash and the activity of pulling things out of the trash. Their facial mask resembles that of a burglar's mask, and can be used to connote thievery while the 'cute' factor of using an animal to depict this idea distances the emoji from negative feelings that emojis like a robber, prisoner, or jail would evoke. These also do not exist at the moment.

For its symbolism, the raccoon has multiple meanings that vary across cultures. In Native American tribes, the raccoon the clan animal for some. It is known as a trickster spirit in children's stories, and his dexterous front paws also mean that it is a symbol for clever thinking in obtaining food and getting away from danger.<sup>6</sup>

The tanuki, in Japanese culture, shares similar symbolism; it is also seen as a trickster, but also "mischievous and jolly." It has endured as a symbol beginning in ancient Japanese culture, and is still depicted now in popular culture, as well as Japanese art.<sup>7</sup>

### **C. Image distinctiveness**

The raccoon face is distinctive in its pointed chin, and has a different coloring than FOX FACE, which is the most similar in terms of facial shape. RACCOON FACE's chin and pointed ears would also differentiate it from PANDA FACE's round features, despite the similar black and white coloring. The raccoon is also grey in color, and could be emphasized more with grey coloring than black, to further distinguish it from PANDA FACE.

### **D. Completeness**

In existing types of emoji, there is currently a gap in scavenger-type animals, and although FOX FACE and HEDGEHOG can both convey wild animals that venture into

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<sup>5</sup> "Hedgehog Face Emoji": <https://www.emojirequest.com/r/HedgehogFaceEmoji>

<sup>6</sup> "Native American Raccoon Mythology": <http://www.native-languages.org/legends-raccoon.htm>

<sup>7</sup> "Japanese Raccoon Dog": [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese\\_raccoon\\_dog](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_raccoon_dog)

urban areas, the raccoon plays its own role in urban dwellings: rooting through and scavenging trash in a noticeable way by humans, which the other two animals do not do.

This emoji would also add to a category of animals associated with Asia, with its dual role as a stand-in for the tanuki. Currently, the new approvals of ZEBRA and GIRAFFE in Unicode Version 10.0 add onto the group of animals from Africa (including LION FACE, ELEPHANT, and RHINOCEROS), yet the one distinctive animal from Asia that currently exists is PANDA FACE – and perhaps SQUID, depending on context.

### E. Frequently requested

While petitions exist to both the Unicode Consortium and one of its member companies, Apple, the lack of evidence of reliability is not conclusive evidence of its frequency of request. Instead, Facebook’s development of raccoon images for their stickers, used across the platform including its chat, suggest that the raccoon is a well-received image, and that a notable amount of interest exists for it.



**Figure 2. Examples of raccoon-themed Facebook stickers**

(A) “Best Friends” sticker pack<sup>8</sup>

(B) “Tanuki” sticker pack<sup>9</sup>

Facebook’s stickers feature has two sticker packs that feature the racoon or tanuki, and another that includes a racoon as one of the sticker options. We can infer a certain quality and level of demand for raccoon images, because the Facebook stickers program is a selective process: the company “handpicks artists and licensing partners [...] and the Facebook creative team works closely with our partners on each pack.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> “Best Friends”: <https://www.facebook.com/stickers/466527456878135/>

<sup>9</sup> “Tanuki”: <https://www.facebook.com/stickers/648176385296599/>

<sup>10</sup> “How can I submit stickers to Facebook?”:

<https://www.facebook.com/help/community/question/?id=726175947542849>

Additionally, an app on the Google Play app store for Android devices, called Raccoon Emojis, has a library of raccoon emoticons. It is in the 1,000 – 5,000 number of downloads category, which provides a quantifiable estimate of the number of users who are interested enough in using raccoon images to search and download a dedicated app to have raccoon emoticons to use. This app’s main negative ratings are also telling; the low rating is primarily because it is not compatible with common communication platforms: Facebook and WhatsApp.<sup>11</sup> Having the raccoon as a Unicode emoji would avert compatibility issues like these.

As an interesting side note, Figure 3<sup>12</sup> shows another example of users who have addressed the lack of a raccoon emoji in a creative and elaborate way:



**Figure 3.** An example of a creative workaround to the raccoon emoji using ASCII characters

<sup>11</sup> "Raccoon Emojis": <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.emoji.raccoons&hl=en>  
<sup>12</sup> [https://twitter.com/neo\\_rama/status/769796300938149888](https://twitter.com/neo_rama/status/769796300938149888)

#### 4. Selection Factors — Exclusion

##### F. Overly specific

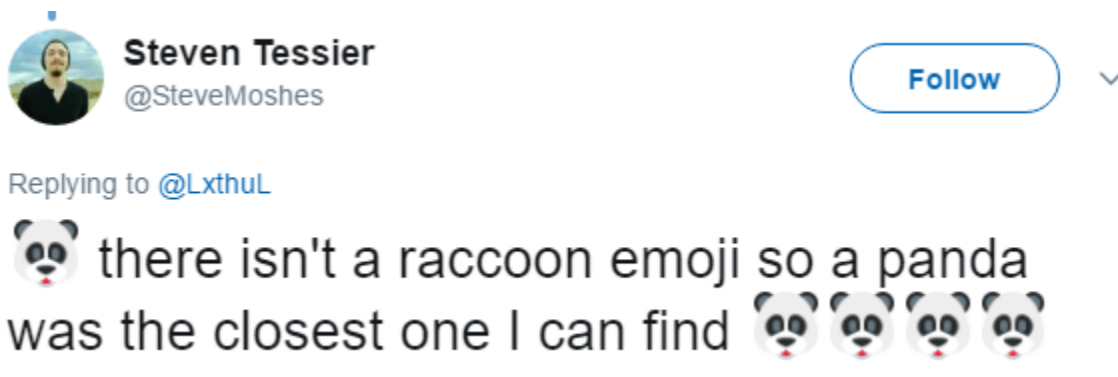
RACCOON FACE is the same level of specificity as the other animal-mammal ones in its category: it depicts one species of animal, rather than being too specific, because no other type of raccoon emoji exists at this time.

##### G. Open-ended

This emoji has symbolic and metaphorical uses, which helps differentiate it from being one of many animal requests.

##### H. Already Representable

While there have been cases of people using PANDA FACE in place of the raccoon, using this emoji this can cause misinterpretation, if a written explanation is not included (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4.** Using PANDA FACE to stand-in for a raccoon emoji and its explanation<sup>13</sup>

For examples of using existing sequences to depict the raccoon, context matters as well. Although the following example would not be appropriate for the cultural meaning of the raccoon in Native American and Japanese cultures, in American pop culture, if someone wanted to represent the raccoon in the context of calling something trash, then the following sequence exists: combining WASTEBASKET and

<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/SteveMoshes/status/871892586314715136>

PANDA FACE.<sup>14</sup> This sequence relies on the knowledge of a nickname for the raccoon: “trash panda”.<sup>15</sup>

However, this nickname is not in the mainstream understanding, so for people unaware of this internet-meme-turned-nickname, the situation circles back to the issue that PANDA FACE looks different enough from a raccoon, in its facial and ear shapes, that some interpretation on the viewer’s end is required.

I. Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities

This image does not fall under these criteria for exclusion. As discussed in Section 3A: Compatibility, one raccoon in popular culture is Rocket Raccoon from Marvel’s *Guardians of the Galaxy*. However, RACCOON FACE would not be strongly associated with that character or its comic book brand, because its coloring – black and grey – and neutral expression makes it look visibly different than the character, which has brown fur and an expressive face.

J. Transient

The usage for this emoji would likely continue in the future; it is not tied to any trend or fad.

K. Faulty Comparison

There is no existing raccoon emoji that this would be a variation of.

**5. Sort location**

- A. Category: Under ‘Animals & Nature’ and in the ‘animal-mammal’ category
- B. Emoji it should come after in that category: After RAT (U+1F400)

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<sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/digits0801/status/872190132165758978>

<sup>15</sup> “There’s a tiny community of people obsessed with ‘trash pandas’”:  
<http://www.businessinsider.com/trash-panda-raccoon-meme-2016-9>