Proposal for SKUNK Emoji

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"...at the first glance, you would say, especially when it walks, that it ought to be called Jupiter's little dog. But it is so stinking, and casts so foul an odor, that it is unworthy of being called the dog of Pluto." From Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France

Abstract

This proposal requests the inclusion of a new animal emoji: SKUNK. The skunk, native to North and South America, is a widely recognizable animal due to its distinctive coat and unmistakable smell. Used comedically in literature, cartoons, and online, the skunk is one of the most loved and detested of mammals. It is exactly this combination of visual distinctiveness, universal familiarity and symbolic meaning that make the skunk a strong candidate for the emoji keyboard.

Image



Introduction

There may not be another animal that elicits as strong a reaction as skunks. Skunks are mammals that live in North and South America within the Mephitidae family¹. Animals in this family are known for using their anal scent glands to deter predators, which is why they are such feared yet comical beings. Skunks are most commonly seen with fluffy black and white coats, a coloring referred to as "aposematism," used to warn predators that they will be difficult to eat, either due to toxicity, smell, or aggression². Though humans are not natural predators for the skunk, most humans do tend to keep their distance once they recognize the skunk's distinctive coat. Even for humans, this aposematism is quite effective, though a skunk does not always need to be seen to make its presence known.

Still, skunks and humans do have a storied historical relationship. Whether skunks are tolerated by humans for their ability to drive away insects or pests on farms, sought after for their striped pelts or canonized as iconic cartoons, skunks have been an undeniable point of discussion across cultures, nations and regions^{1a}. For example, in 1634 the skunk was taken to be a symbol of sin by a French Jesuit missionary who, after encountering one for the very first time, wrote "no sewer ever smelled so bad"³. Due to the time period when this text was written, it is difficult to conclude whether the author intended this to be in jest, but for modern readers, the comedy is certainly there.

Because of the skunk's unique defense mechanism and distinctive fur coat, they continue to elicit strong responses, inspire conversation and to be a point of familiarity across ages, genders, backgrounds and nationalities. It is exactly this unique combination of distinctiveness and universality that makes skunks a valuable addition to the emoji keyboard today.

¹ "Skunk." Wikipedia, The free encyclopedia. Last edited on 18 March 2018.

^{1a} "Skunk and Man" Encyclopedia Britannica. Last edited on 1 April 2018.

² "Aposematism." Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Last edited on 8 March 2018.

³ Thwaites, Reuben Gold (ed). *Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France*, volume 6, page 315.



Figure A

Between 2016 and 2017 a meme and hashtag, #TheInternetNamesAnimals, provided the skunk with the Internet notoriety it deserves. In this meme, Twitter users suggested new names for the skunk, but all had the same general theme, such as "Fart Squirrel" (Figure A), "Stink Mink" (Figure B), "Fart Kitty" (Figure C), "Appalachian Fart Penguin" (Figure D), and "Fart Badger" (Figure E). For a skunk to be associated with a mink, kitty, penguin, and badger within one meme is further evidence of its cute-factor appeal and its universality.

Popular culture has capitalized on the cute nature of the skunk. Skunk characters have made appeared in the following animated features:

- Bambi (animated movie, 1942), as the character Flower⁵ and Miss Skunk⁶
- Looney Tunes (animated TV series, 1945 -), as the romantic Pepé Le Pew⁷
- Pogo (comic strip,1913–1973), as Miz Ma'm'selle Hepzibah⁸
- Skunk Fu! (animated TV series, 2007 present), as Skunk⁹
- Bear in the Big Blue House (TV series, 1997 2006), as Snook¹⁰

https://twitter.com/KarenCarr Illus/status/804789180765274117, Figure C:

https://twitter.com/helloitsmerlot/status/745123867006369793, Figure D:

https://twitter.com/cvrran/status/713169406780641280, Figure E:

https://twitter.com/shells_twits/status/713039431096209408.

⁴ Links to Tweets: Figure A: https://twitter.com/zombie_chic_87/status/860938139388563461, Figure B:

⁵ "Flower." The Disney Wiki.

⁶ "Miss Skunk." The Disney Wiki.

⁷ "Pepe le Pew." The Looney Tunes Wiki.

⁸ "Miz Ma'm'selle Hepzibah." Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Last edited on 6 March 2018.

⁹ "Skunk Fu!" Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Last edited 18 March 2018.

¹⁰ "Snook" The Muppet Wiki.

It shouldn't go without mention that both Pepé Le Pew and Miz Ma'm'selle Hepzibah are French characters but, as already noted from the predominant locations of skunks (North and South American) and the French Jesuit Missionaries, skunks do not live in France. Furthermore, these animated versions of skunks are also often shown in a "loving" and "romantic" light, including Flower and Miss Skunk, who fall in love by the end of *Bambi*. Perhaps it's the skunk's cuteness that makes it easy to associate them with love. Or perhaps it just makes them more comical.

Similar to #TheInternetNamesAnimals, Looney Tunes put a comical spin on the skunk's defining trait, applying it to episode names such as "Odor of the Day," "Odor-able Kitty," "For Scent-imental Reasons," "Really Scent," and "Past Purfumance" to name a few¹¹. Of course, Looney Tunes far preceded #TheInternetNamesAnimals, but the trend indicates that the SKUNK emoji add to these comedic possibilities.





Figure B Figure C

¹¹ "Odor of the Day (1948)." IMDB.





Figure D Figure E

Names

CLDR Short Name: Skunk

CLDR keywords: skunk, weasel, badger

Selection Factors Inclusion

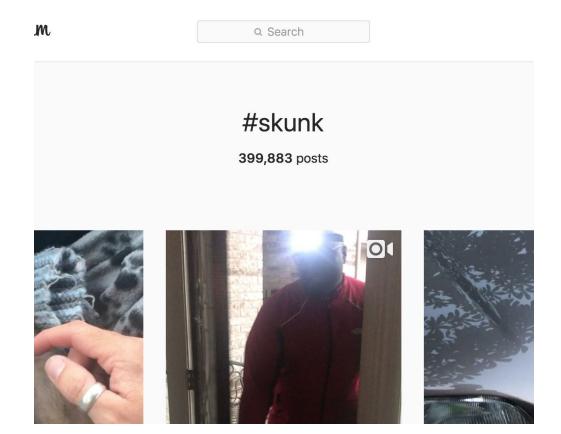
A. Compatibility

The proposed SKUNK emoji would be an entirely new character for iOS, Android, and Windows.

B. Expected Usage Level

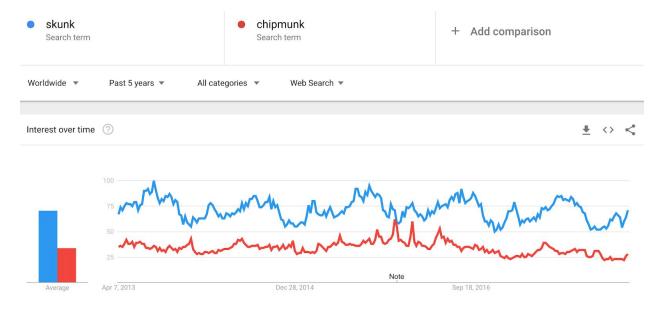
Frequency

Skunk is a very popular hashtag on Instagram.

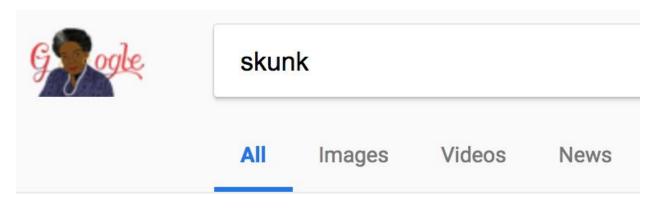


Instagram #skunkemoji

Google Trends (Web Search) indicates a level of interest in "skunk" much greater than that of "chipmunk," which is already an emoji.

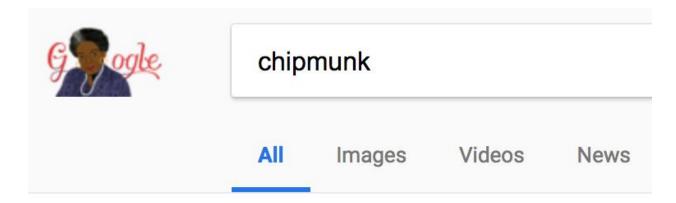


Other required evidence relative to reference emoji SKUNK:



About 21,900,000 results (0.64 seconds)

Skunk - Wikipedia



About 20,600,000 results (0.50 seconds)

Chipmunk - Wikipedia



skunk

All Images Videos

27,000,000 Results

Any time ▼

Skunk - Wikipedia



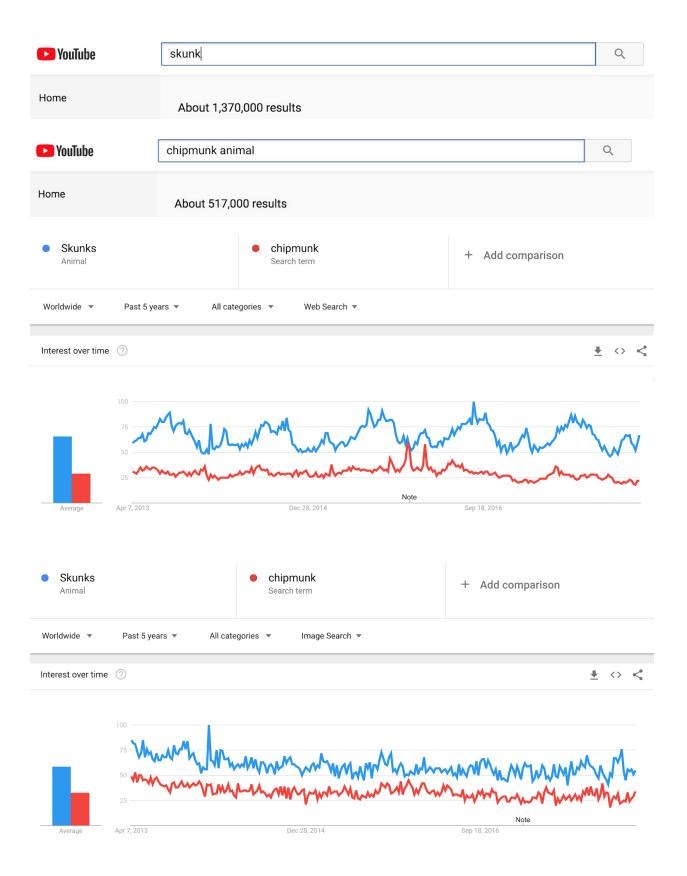
chipmunk

All Images Videos

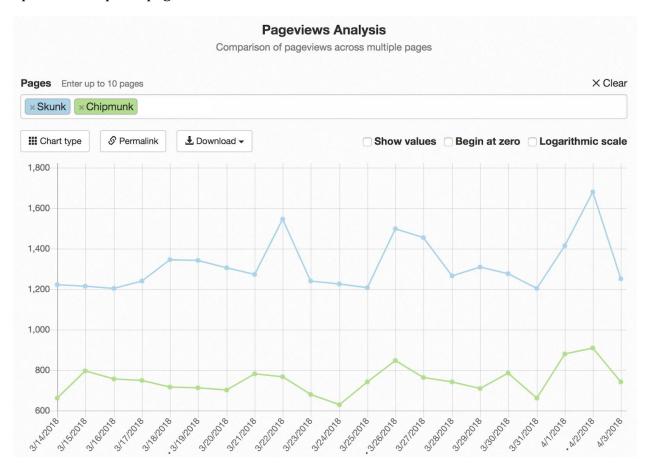
18,100,000 Results

Any time ▼

Chipmunk - Wikipedia



Optional Wikipedia pageview screenshot:



Multiple Usages

The SKUNK is of value as an animal emoji because it has both literal *and* symbolic meaning. It could be used to literally represent a skunk sighting. It could also be used to communicate 'a bad smell', 'something foul', 'strong cannabis', etc. - symbolic meanings all related to the strong smell skunks release when threatened.

Additionally, noting that something is smelly or foul can also have a literal or symbolic meaning. For example, a user could symbolically use a skunk at the end of a text message to communicate that something around them literally smells bad. Or, a user could symbolically use a skunk at the end of a text message to communicate that a situation they've encountered "stinks"s. For example, the result of a competitive sport match or an event on the news.

Lastly, because skunks are native to Canada, North America, Mexico and South America, there is potential for widespread understanding and usage of the SKUNK emoji by people from all of these regions where skunks are found, in addition to usage by people who may not live in one

of these regions but are familiar with skunks and the symbolic meanings attached to them. Case in point, the aforementioned popular French cartoons.

Use in Sequences

SKUNK + DASHING AWAY = flatulence

SKUNK + TWO HEARTS = Pepé Le Pew

SKUNK + NAUSEATED FACE = stinky

SKUNK + FACE WITH MEDICAL MASK = stinky

SKUNK + NOSE = stinky

SKUNK + PERSON GESTURING NO = stinky

SKUNK + DOG or CAT = encounter with a skunk

SKUNK + CANNED FOOD = tomato bath (remedy for skunk smell)

SKUNK + MONEY WITH WINGS = (as a verb) failed to pay

SKUNK + BASKETBALL = (as a verb) defeat

SKUNK + ELEPHANT or HORSE FACE = political landslide

SKUNK + BASEBALL = skunks in the outfield

SKUNK + CIGARETTE = cannabis

SKUNK + FLOWER + TOASTING CHAMPAGNE FLUTES = skunk at a garden party

SKUNK + AUTOMOBILE = skunk on the road

SKUNK + WOOZY FACE + BEER MUG = drunk as a skunk

C. Image Distinctiveness

The proposed SKUNK emoji is its most distinctive visual quality, and will allow it to stand out from other animals with fluffy, long tails. The proposed side facing position allows for it to pair well with the DASHING AWAY

emoji, for comedic effect.

D. Completeness

The addition of a SKUNK emoji will further the emoji set of iconic, small, fuzzy animals, similar to the HEDGEHOG □ and the RABBIT ¾. Such a set includes many representative animals from animated movies, such as *Bambi*, *Zootopia*.

Since the skunk is from South America, it will also add to that continent's animal representatives that are currently being proposed to Unicode, such as the SLOTH emoji.

E. Frequently requested

A search for "skunk emoji" on Twitter brings back users requesting the addition of the skunk emoji¹², as evidenced from Google Trends in section B. In the most apropos Tweet, @IDoubtIt

¹² Link to "skunk emoji" search: https://twitter.com/search?q=skunk%20emoji&src=typd.

asks, "Why is there no skunk emoji? This stinks" (see Figure I^{13} . Similarly, see Figure M^{14a} and Figure N^{14b}).



Figure I

Other Twitter users use the skunk emoji request while describing their own their unfortunate luck (see Figure J¹⁴), while others use "skunk" as a verb and comment on defeats (see Figure K¹⁵ and Figure L¹⁶). No matter the topic, Twitter users utilize their "skunk" moment to comment on the lack of the skunk emoji. There is even a hashtag for the request: #skunkemoji¹⁷.

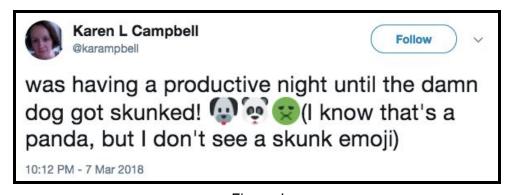


Figure J

¹³ Link to Tweet: https://twitter.com/IDoubtlt/status/949678704241926144.

^{14a}Link to Tweet: https://twitter.com/N Morrison /status/950544175086391296

^{14b}Link to Tweet: https://twitter.com/Puckywuckums/status/965947395535179776

¹⁴ Link to Tweet: https://twitter.com/karampbell/status/971584521824014336.

¹⁵ Link to Tweet: https://twitter.com/TravJeffries/status/751835251035475968.

¹⁶ Link to Tweet: https://twitter.com/sheridantbrown/status/963436163234189312.

¹⁷ Link to Hashtag: https://twitter.com/search?q=%23skunkemoji&src=typd.



Figure K

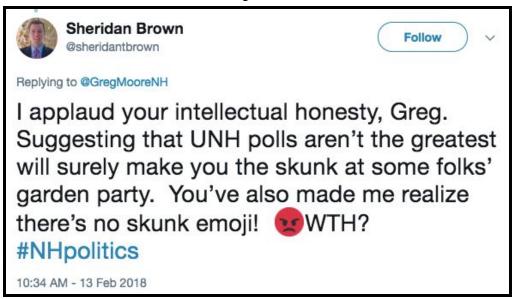


Figure L



Figure M



Figure N

Selection Factors Exclusion

F. Overly Specific

Though there already exists other small, fluffy mammal emoji -- such as the CHIPMUNK **™**, RAT **¾**, MOUSE **¼**, RABBIT **¼**, and HEDGEHOG □ -- the SKUNK emoji would be the first of its specific kind, and there only needs to be one to indicate its shape.

G. Open Ended

A SKUNK emoji would be a unique addition to Unicode characters. It would complement existing small, fluffy mammal emoji, while also providing more animal diversity.

H. Already Representable

Currently, the only way to represent a skunk is by using CHIPMUNK or PANDA FACE combined with DASHING AWAY (Figure O). This method is comical, but the addition of a SKUNK emoji will allow for even greater comedic effect when combined with the DASHING AWAY emoji.



Figure O

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

The proposed SKUNK emoji does not represent a specific logo, brand, UI icon, sign, person or deity. There are companies, such as Skunk Works¹⁸ and Skunk¹⁹, that use generic skunk imagery for their logo, but these logos are distinct from each other, as no one person can hold a copyright, trademark, or claim over the general shape of a skunk.

J. Transient

The skunk, as an animal, will not change its form.

K. Faulty Comparison

Other animal in the distinctive black and white coloring include the PANDA FACE , ZEBRA , PENGUIN , COW , and BADGER, but none of these emoji appear similar to the proposed design of the SKUNK emoji, with its long, fluffy tail.

Exact Images

The proposed emoji does not require an exact image to be distinguishable.

Sort location

The SKUNK emoji is proposed in the "Animal" category, after CHIPMUNK **(b)** and before HEDGEHOG □.

Other Information

(optional)

¹⁸ Skunk Works website: https://www.lockheedmartin.com/us/aeronautics/skunkworks.html.

¹⁹ Skunk Twitter page: https://twitter.com/skunk.

Character Properties

The other character properties are suggested to be defined as follows.

General Category:

Canonical Combining Class:

Bidirectional Class:

Decomposition Type: Numeric Type:

Numeric Type: Numeric Value:

Bidirectional Mirrored: N Unicode 1 Name:

ISO Comment:

Simple Uppercase Mapping: Simple Lowercase Mapping: Simple Title case Mapping:

Author Bios

Kelly Marie Blanchat (<u>kelly.blanchat@gmail.com</u>) is a librarian in New Haven, Connecticut, where a family of fluffy skunks are currently living in her backyard. She uses concepts from social media to teach students about information retrieval and being socially conscious information consumers and creators.

Shelby Jennings (<u>ssealsjennings@gmail.com</u>) works in marketing analytics in New York, New York and has, so far, successfully avoided any traumatizing skunk encounters. She's particularly interested in emergent media and how consumers interact with technology and is also always on the hunt for new go-to emojis to use.