

Proposal for Emoji: POLAR BEAR

Submitter: Samantha Sunne and Frederik Riedel

Date: Updated July 2019 (Originally submitted May 2019)

CLDR Short Name: POLAR BEAR

CLDR Keywords: BEAR | WHITE | SNOW | POLAR | POLE | ICE | ARCTIC | NORTH | COLD | GREENLAND

Sort Location: in the ANIMAL-MAMMAL category as a ZWJ option for BEAR

Reference Emoji: ELEPHANT



Credit: Aphelandra Messer/Emojination. Free for use in context of this proposal.

Abstract

This proposal requests the addition of a POLAR BEAR emoji as a ZWJ sequence option for the current BEAR emoji (🐻). Polar bears are one of the most widely talked about animals in the world, because they have become a symbol of climate change and global warming. "Because of melting sea ice, it is likely that more polar bears will soon starve," National Geographic wrote last year.

"Climate change is heating up the Arctic faster than anywhere else, and sea ice is shrinking 14 percent per decade. Even today, in the middle of the bitter cold Arctic winter, satellites show there is about 770,000 square miles less sea ice than the 1981 to 2010 median (That's an area larger than Alaska and California combined)."¹

Very often, when people mention polar bears online or over text, they are discussing the animals in the context of climate change.²

¹

<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2018/02/polar-bears-starve-melting-sea-ice-global-warming-study-bear-sea-environment/>

² [AJ+ on Twitter, April 2019](#)



Polar bears have a number of other significances — like the Polar Bear Plunge charity run, the game Minecraft, Coca-Cola commercials and zoos. It serves as a symbol of the North and/or Arctic regions. However, it is mainly the polar bear's intense significance as a symbol of climate change that we think the POLAR BEAR has a future as an emoji.

Introduction

Polar bears, or the *Ursus Maritimus* species, are a "Vulnerable" species according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.³ This means they will likely become endangered if humans don't take action to improve their situation. There are currently between 20,000 and 25,000 polar bears in the world, mostly located in Arctic areas like Canada and Greenland. If nothing changes, scientists say, fully two-thirds of the world's polar bear population will be gone by 2050.⁴

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulnerable_species

⁴

<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/11/131122-polar-bear-migration-in-hudson-bay-science/>

The vulnerable bears are frequently in the news in the last five years, mostly due to climate change. Earlier this year, a town in northern Russia declared a state of emergency due to dozens of polar bears being driven to human settlements by the lack of food.⁵



In addition, polar bears are a symbol of Northern regions like the North Pole, Greenland, Canada, Scandinavia and Siberia. The Canadian Toonie, or two-dollar coin, features a polar bear alongside the Maple Leaf, another symbol of Canada.






⁵ <http://time.com/5526741/polar-bears-russia/>



The Canadian two-dollar coin depicts a polar bear standing on ice. Image from [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loonie).

The current emoji library, v. 12.0, depicts bears and animals that represent regions around the world. These include the Koala (🐨), a symbol of Australia, the Panda (🐼) of Asia, and a brown bear (🐻), which is found in North America. However, no bear is available for the northern regions mentioned above, and a POLAR BEAR emoji would help boost emoji representation for Russia, Canada, Iceland, Greenland, and several other countries in northern Europe.

Given the extremely high and timely demand for a POLAR BEAR emoji, we suggest a ZWJ sequence for (BEAR + ZWJ + WHITE MEDIUM SQUARE) ([U+1F43B](https://unicode.org/repo/binary/1F43B) + ZWJ + [U+25FB](https://unicode.org/repo/binary/25FB)).

Internal Representation	Intended Display	Fallback
 + ZWJ + 		 

Selection Factors Inclusion

Compatibility

No platform has a polar bear emoji, but a team of climate-conscious artists created a sticker pack called Climoji, which includes a polar bear.⁶

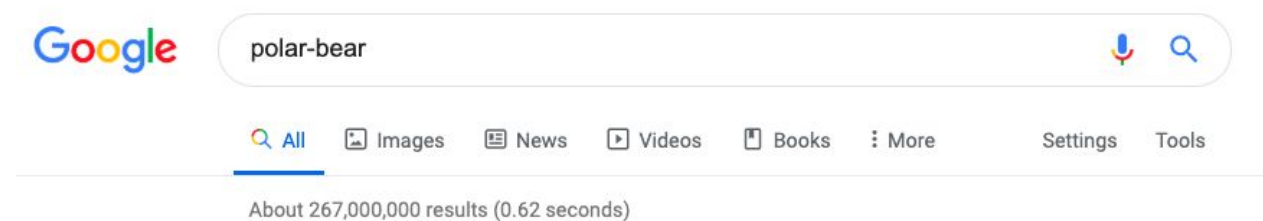


The polar bear image on the Climoji keyboard depicts a starving polar bear on a block of melting ice.

Expected Usage Level

- Frequency

Google Search



⁶ <https://www.climoji.org/the-climoji>

Bing Search



All

Images

Videos


Maps



7-20 Of 24,900,000 Results


Any time ▾


Google Video Search


Show apps








 All

 Images

 News

 Videos

 Books

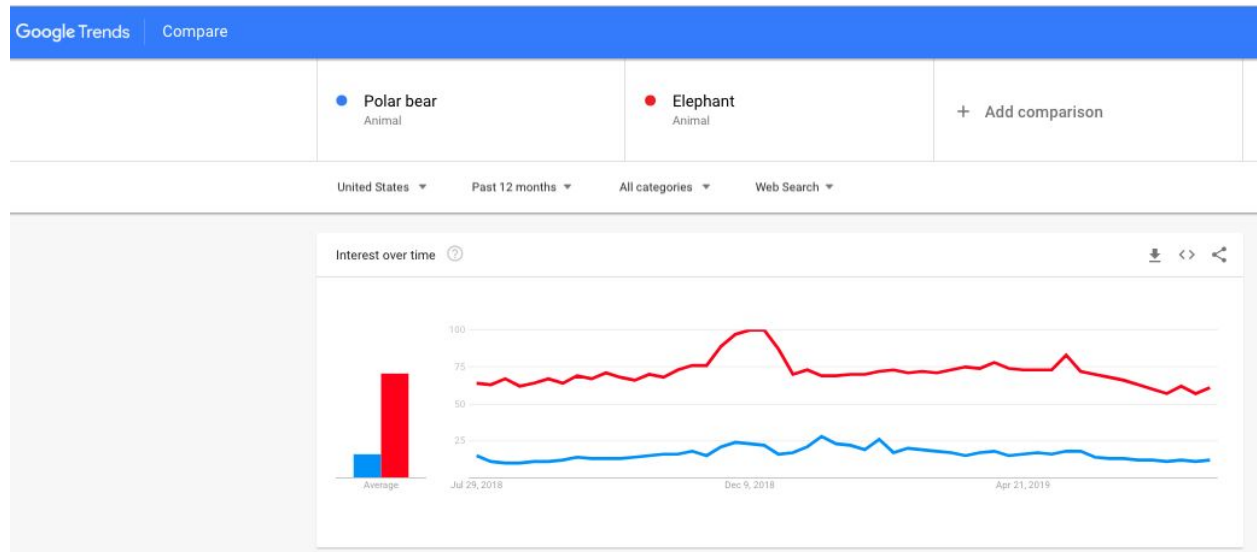
 More

Settings

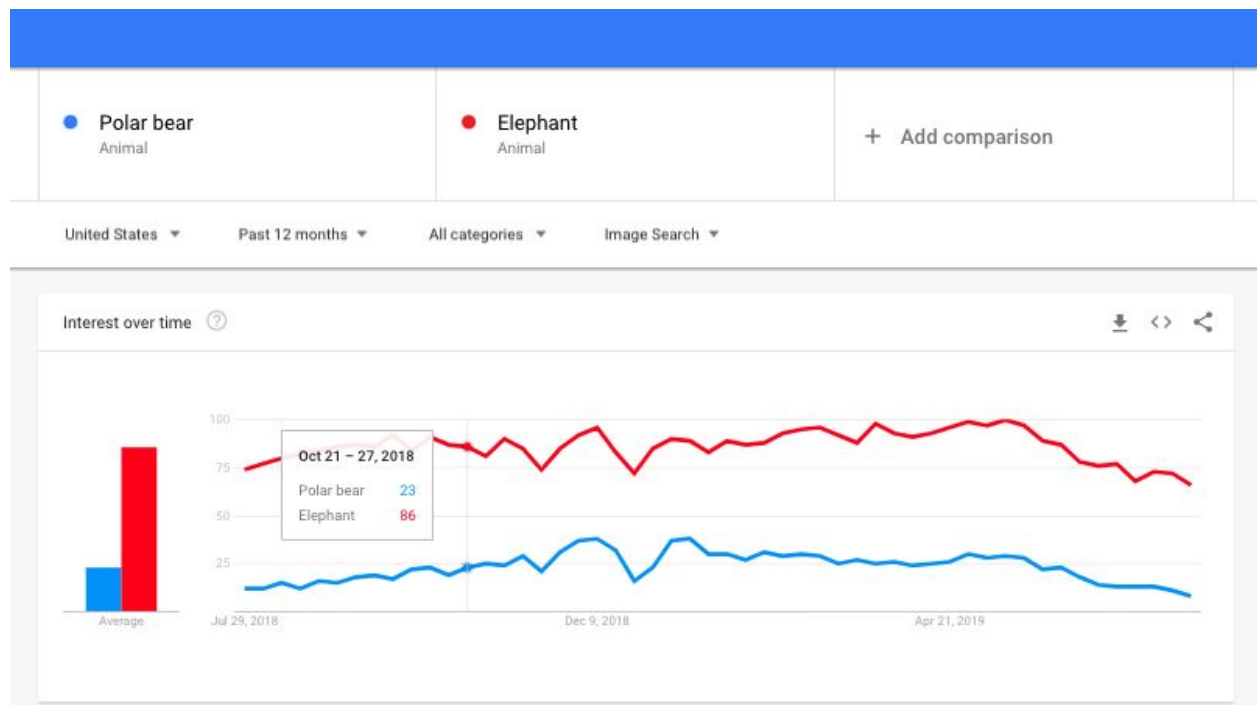
Tools

About 12,100,000 results (0.39 seconds)

Google Trends: Web Search



Google Trends: Image Search



- Multiple Usages

Polar bears are popular in usages outside the animal itself. For instance, according to Google Trends, one of the most common searches using the term "polar bear" is the Polar Bear Plunge, an annual charity run practiced in many cities around the world.⁷ In Rochester, New York, more than 2,000 "plungers" ran into cold water to raise more than \$300,000 to benefit the Special Olympics.⁸



The logo for the [Maryland Polar Bear Plunge](#) depicts a polar bear holding a shield.

Polar bears have also made exciting appearances, like their 2016 debut in the game Minecraft.



⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polar_bear_plunge

⁸ <http://polarplunge.net/history>

A Minecraft fan shares his excitement over the announcement of polar bears being added to Minecraft.
Screencap from [YouTube](#).

- Use in sequences

Previously, some users combined "Snowflake" (❄️) with "Bear" (🐻) to indicate "Polar Bear" (❄️🐻). With the creation of the POLAR BEAR emoji, other Arctic or winter-related emoji can convey Northern regions, winter seasons, or simply cold weather. These complementary emoji include "Skier" (🏂), "Scarf" (🧣) and "Cloud with Snow" (☁️).

Likewise, the POLAR BEAR could be combined with a few emoji to indicate climate change. The Emojiquake group recommends the Volcano, Wave and Tornado emoji (🌋🌊🌀) to indicate disasters.⁹ However, none of these options directly reference climate change, so POLAR BEAR would be extremely influential in that regard.

- Breaking New Ground

This emoji would break new ground by creating a ZWJ sequence for the "Bear" (🐻) emoji, and would be the first color variation on an animal.

Image Distinctiveness

A "Bear" emoji (🐻) has been available for a long time, but it is clearly distinct from POLAR BEAR by its color. "Mouse Face" (🐭), "Panda" (🐼) and "Koala" (🐨) are also somewhat similar, but clearly differentiated by their color and detail.

Completeness

The polar bear is practically the last bear species not represented in emoji.

Sort Location

Category: Animals

The POLAR BEAR should come right next to the BEAR FACE, or alternatively be a long-press option similar to skin-tones of human emojis.

Implementation

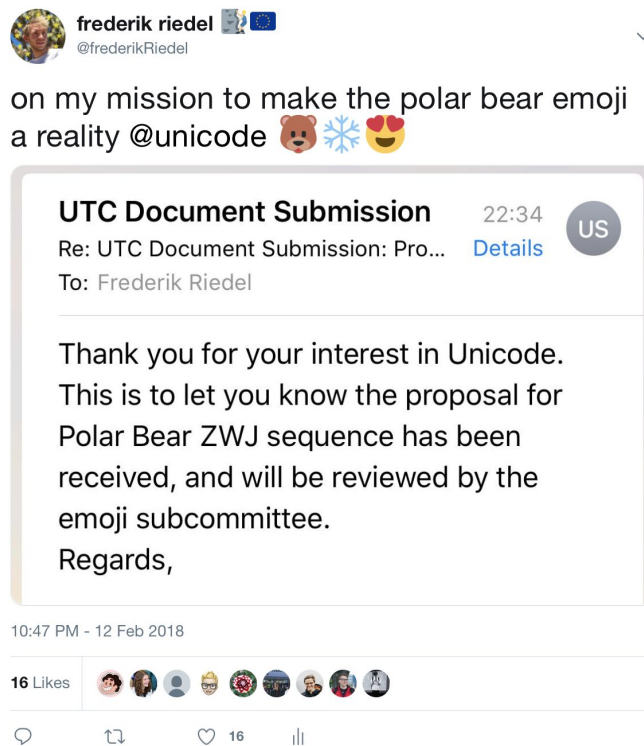
Instead of adding an entirely new unicode character for POLAR BEAR, we suggest adding a ZWJ sequence consisting of "SNOW FLAKE ZWJ BEAR FACE" (❄️🐻).

⁹ <https://www.emojiquake.org/>

Frequently Requested

The polar bear has been requested several times on the official Unicode emoji request lists. In addition, as seen in the Introduction, there is very strong demand on social media.





Selection Factors Exclusion

Overly Specific

The POLAR BEAR is not overly specific because polar bears are the only bear that is entirely white, and, as indicated earlier in this proposal, it is representative of several different things.

Open Ended

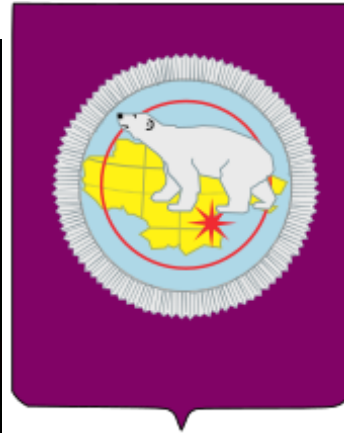
The POLAR BEAR emoji is not open-ended because it has specific connotations as a vulnerable animal and a global news topic.

Already Representable

Unicode does include a "Bear" (🐻), but it is brown, and therefore very clearly not a polar bear.

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

Polar bears frequently appear on coins, flags, sigils and other signs, especially of regions in the north, like Canada, Iceland and Greenland. This shows the bears' significance as a symbol of culture and topography, though they are not copyrightable.



Transient

Polar bears are one of very few species that have remained roughly the same since prehistoric eras. They are similar to other bears except that they have all-white fur, so they are recognizable and are not expected to change any time soon.

Faulty Comparison

N/A

Other Character Properties

(these are preset for emoji, so you can leave this)

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

General Category: So

Canonical Combining Class: 0

Bidirectional Class: ON

Decomposition Type: Decomposition Mapping:

Numeric Type:

Numeric Value:

Bidirectional Mirrored: N Unicode 1 Name:

ISO Comment:

Simple Uppercase Mapping: Simple Lowercase Mapping: Simple Titlecase Mapping:

Bios

Samantha Sunne (samanthasunne@gmail.com) is an emoji enthusiast and frequent traveler who would love to see a polar bear before they go extinct.

Frederik Riedel (frederik@riedel.net) is a polar bear enthusiast and software engineer who believes that a polar bear emoji would bring more awareness for climate change in our everyday communications.