

Proposal for Emoji: VULTURE

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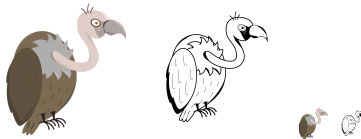
Date: REVISED OCTOBER 3, 2019

Identification:

A. CLDR Short Name: VULTURE

B. CLDR keywords: scavenger, “tumbusi” (vulture in Swahili), vulture fund, griffon vulture, condor, turkey vulture, carrion-eater, bird, raptor

2. Images:



Eurasian vulture *Gyps fulvus*. Modified by Sara Mateo from www.shutterstock.com “By Nadzin. Royalty-free stock vector images ID: 611766905” under “Plus Licencia Estándar”. Free to use for this proposal.

3. Sort Order: in the ANIMAL-BIRD category, after EAGLE

Abstract

This proposal is to request the inclusion of a new emoji as a Unicode character: VULTURE. VULTUREs and condors are a visually distinct species and the only vertebrates that feed exclusively on carrion. As such, they have many figurative meanings related to both negative and positive concepts in popular culture; in the former, VULTUREs represent as death or greed, while the latter suggests cleanness, renewal, or clairvoyance. This proposal represents an opportunity to broaden the set of animal emoji by including a characteristic and unique member of the animal kingdom — the VULTURE.

Introduction

Vultures and condors are large raptor species specialized on consuming exclusively death animal matter (carrion), i.e. they are obligate scavengers. To locate this ephemeral food, they have keen eyesight and a large ability to move with low energy consumption by soaring), so they have large wingspans of up to 3 m length. 23 species of vultures and condors inhabit all continents but Australia and Antarctica. 17 out of these 23 species are currently threatened or near threatened according to the The Red List of Threatened Species of the International Union for Nature Conservation¹. The major threats are related to human persecution (e.g. by poisoning and poaching) and human-mediated carrion, from farming or hunting, contaminated with veterinary drugs, lead or other toxic compounds. Collisions with wind turbines and power lines also threat vultures and condors worldwide. By rapidly consuming dead animals, vultures and condors are widely recognized as important and beneficial species recycling energy and nutrients in natural ecosystems and contributing to carcass disposal and control of disease spreading. Furthermore, as carrion-eaters they are also associated with death, having important cultural and spiritual roles in ancient cultures (e.g. Parsi in India), while being traditionally related with bad feelings in occidental cultures (e.g.

¹IUCN 2018: www.iucnredlist.org/search?query=vulture&searchType=species

death, greed...). Vulture funds are in fact used to describe investors that take profit of companies in difficulties. Other associated meanings of vultures and condors are related to protection and clairvoyance (because their high ability to rapidly locate carcass over large areas).

Complete information on species and threats is available at the **Multi-species Action Plan to Conserve African-Eurasian Vultures**² and IUCN Red List of Threatened Species³.

In line with the multiracial and multicultural spirit currently incorporated into the emoji, we would like to propose a multiracial/multicultural vulture emoji that will allow people from all over the world to select the vulture or condor species that better represents them. For example, the Eurasian griffon can represent people in Europe but also in Asia and Africa (because of its similarity with other vulture species of the same genus, i.e. Gyps; see, for example, “Vultures of the World” at <https://www.birdorable.com/vultures/>), condors and turkey vultures will better represent people in America. Additionally, other vulture species such as the bearded and the Egyptian vultures will be more familiar to people in Europe, Southeast Asia and South Africa. Finally, large vultures such as the cinereous, red-headed and lappet-faced vultures are present in Europe, Asia and Africa, respectively.

Selection factors — Inclusion

Compatibility

This is a new emoji for inclusion in Unicode and other systems. It will contribute to various phrases and usages as defined below.

²Vulture MsAP, www.cms.int/raptors/en/workinggroup/multi-species-action-plan-protect-african-urasian-vultures

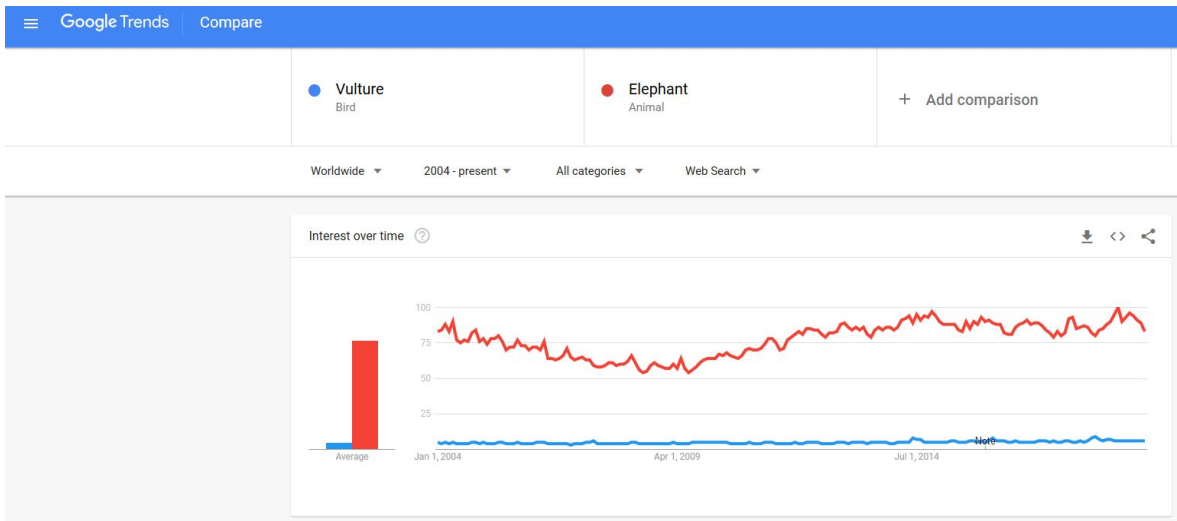
³IUCN 2018; www.iucnredlist.org

Expected usage level

Frequency

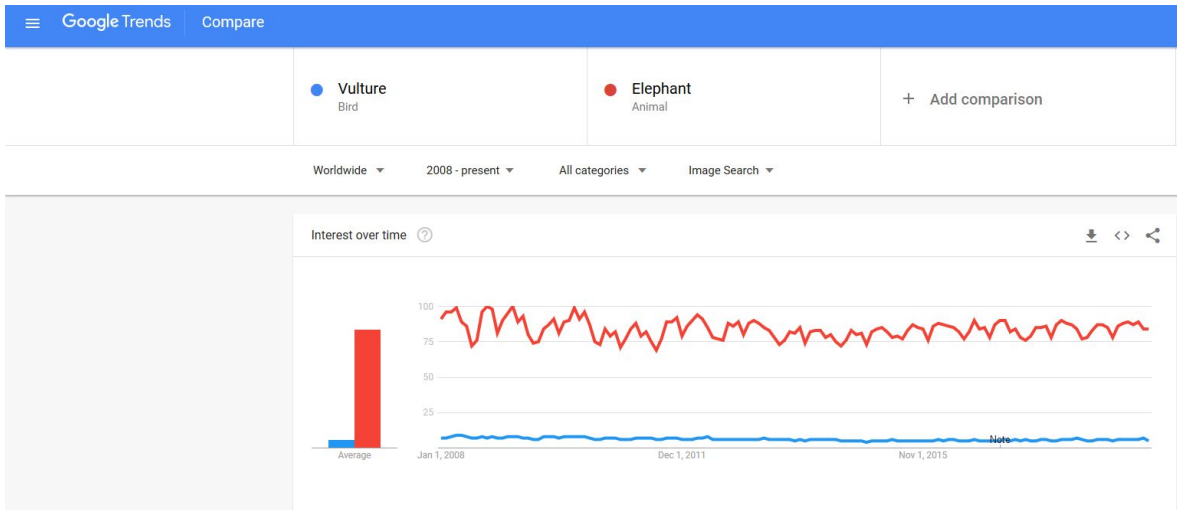
Google Trends: Web Search

According to Google Trends, in the longest period available (January 1st, 2004 – July 17th 2019), search interest of VULTURE as a bird (blue line) has remained relatively consistent over the past decade and a half. ELEPHANT outclasses it by a significant margin, but VULTURE remains steadily searched for over time.



Google Trends Image Search

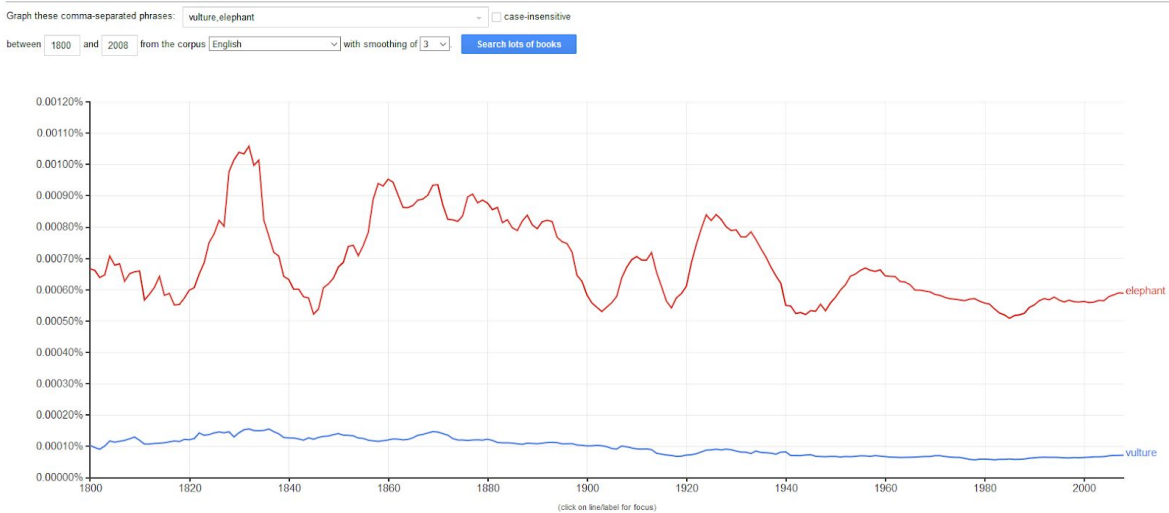
The results for “Image search” in Google Trends showed similar results to those obtained for “Web search”, with ELEPHANT moving up and down over time while VULTURE remains steady, if lower.



Google Ngram

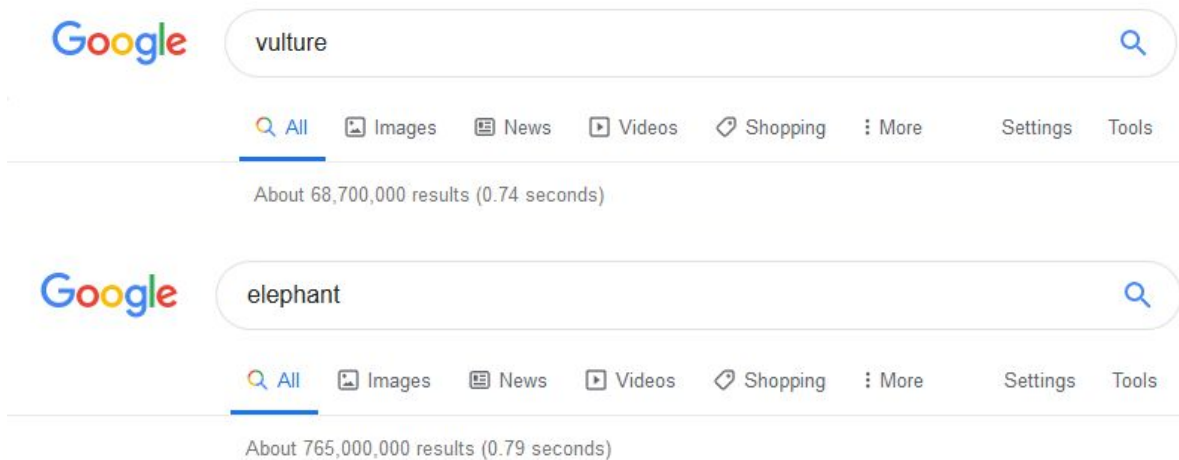
ELEPHANT appears in more books than VULTURE, although the former faces a steep decline around the 1940s and never recovers, while the latter is, as in the Google Trends searches, consistent.

Google Books Ngram Viewer



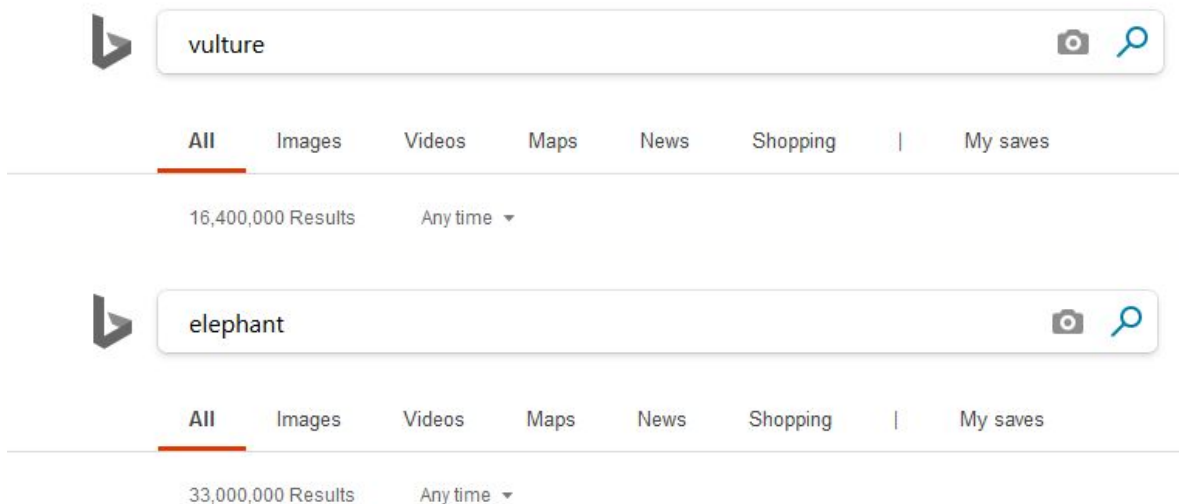
Google Web Search:

ELEPHANT outclasses VULTURE by a factor of 10. There nearly 800 million hits for ELEPHANT, and 70 million for the bird.



Bing:

ELEPHANT is searched roughly twice as often on Microsoft's search engine than VULTURE.



Google Video Search:



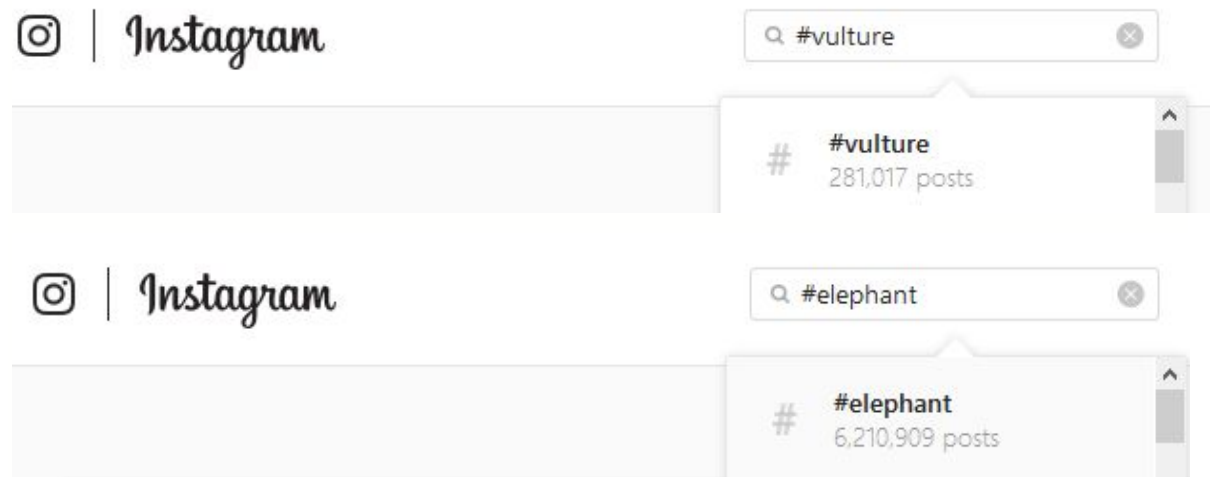
Google logo with a person icon. Search bar contains "vulture". Navigation tabs: All, Images, News, Videos (selected). Results: About 14,100,000 results (0.27 seconds).



Google logo with a person icon. Search bar contains "elephant". Navigation tabs: All, Images, News, Videos (selected). Results: About 131,000,000 results (0.29 seconds).

Instagram:

VULTURE again comes in second, with ELEPHANT appearing over 6 million times, and VULTURE nearly 300,000.

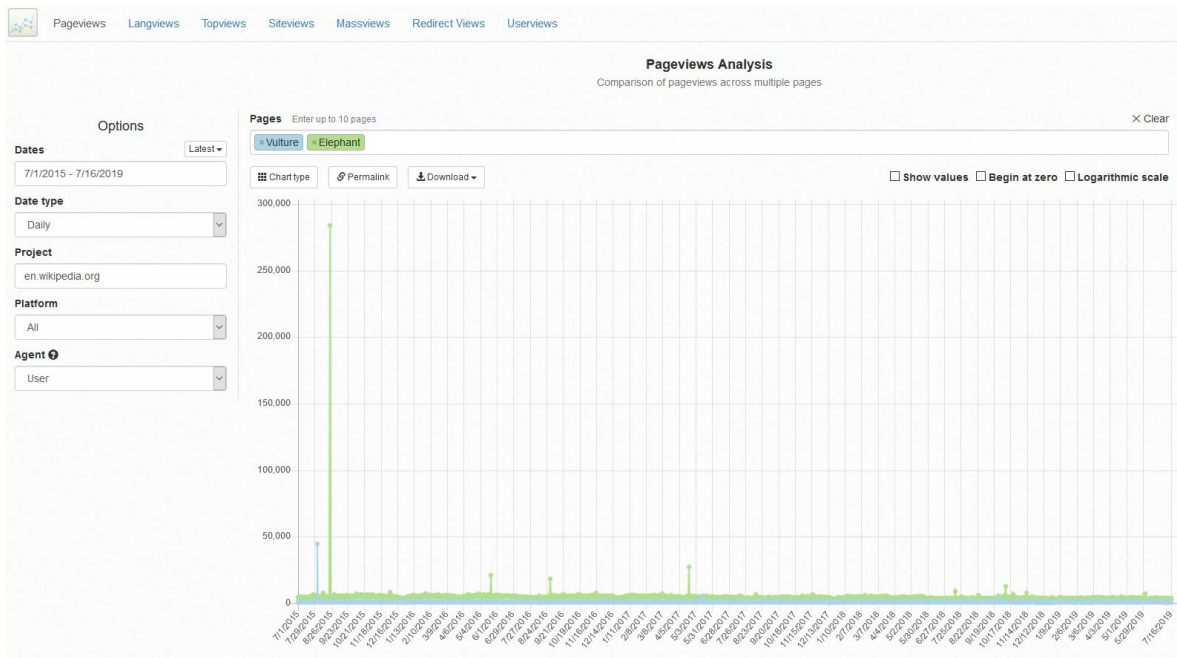


Instagram logo and name. Search bar: #vulture. Result: #vulture 281,017 posts.

Instagram logo and name. Search bar: #elephant. Result: #elephant 6,210,909 posts.

Wikipedia Search:

Though VULTURE is searched with consistency, ELEPHANT has been researched more frequently on Wikipedia. Particularly notable is the large jump for both in July 2015.



Multiple Usages

The emoji here proposed, VULTURE, can be used to refer to multiple concepts, from their literal meanings as animals to figurative terms referring to people, behaviors and other concepts. They are often used in popular culture, including in cartoons and comics, to convey some of the following movies:

- 1-. VULTUREs are **birds**, raptors and obligate scavengers (i.e. they feed exclusively on carrion).
- 2-. Since they feed on carrion, VULTUREs are frequently used to represent **death**.

3-. VULTURE is also used with negative implications to refer to a **rapacious or predatory person** in different cultures and languages (e.g. English, Spanish), eg. "circling like VULTURES" waiting for someone to fail so you can profit from the dregs of their loss.

4-. VULTUREs are also used to represent behaviors such as **patience**, as they are known to loom over dying animals, waiting for the chance to feast.

5-. By consuming rotten carcasses, VULTUREs prevent the spread of diseases while recycling nutrients and energy, so they are also related to **cleansing, renewal and transformation** not only in ecology and wildlife conservation disciplines but also in many different cultures.

6-. Since the world financial crisis in 2007-2008, **VULTURE fund** has become a popular word used to refer to an investment fund that takes profit of companies in default.

7-. In ancient cultures such as Egyptians or Mayas, VULTUREs and condors mean **protection**.

8-. Indigenous African and American cultures consider that VULTUREs and condors (due to their acute vision, and ability to find carrion) possess **clairvoyant** powers.

Use in sequences

VULTURE can be used in several sequences, e.g. those related to animals and birds as well as figurative ones such as those related to death or those related to money and greed (as in vulture funds).

Breaking new ground

Alfo Ramirez @calavinyas39 · 20 Dec 2016
Where is the **vulture emoji**?! 🙄 @WhatsApp

🗨️ 1 ↻ 1 ❤️ 1

Knox Fortune ✓ @knoxfortune · 17 Sep 2016
We need a **vulture emoji**.

🗨️ 1 ↻ 1 ❤️ 7

Selection factors — Exclusion

Overly specific

The VULTURE is recognizable, relevant and not overly specific. The emoji represents species of a major animal group does not included up to date, i.e. VULTURES. VULTURE can represent as many as 23 species present in five of the seven continents, i.e. Africa, the Americans, Asia, and Europe.

Open-ended

VULTURE is a distinct entity, rather than one of many items within a set; it is distinct and does not open up a direct open-ended set of related symbols.

Already representable

As previously explained, VULTURE cannot currently be represented by an existing emoji. The closest option would be to use the EAGLE , or other birds of prey, but none of them offer an accurate representation of a vulture, as it is a physically distinct species, with a bunch of figurative meanings not represented by other animals.

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

VULTURES and condors are largely used for non-profit organizations related to their conservation and they are also represented as deities in some ancient

cultures (see above). Nonetheless, they are wild species and therefore they are neither registered brands nor associated to a particular stigma.

Transient

The VULTURE will represent a group of birds including up to 23 different species widely distributed in all continents but Australia and Antarctica. Although some of these species are threatened with extinction, the entire group is not expected to disappear, especially considering the important efforts currently under way for conserving these species worldwide.

Faulty comparison

The VULTURE emoji is not proposed because of its similarity with other existing emoji. In fact, it is proposed on its own merits to fill an existing gap in the Animals section that also affect figurative meanings widely used across the world (see above).

Exact images

VULTUREs are unique birds, with long necks, “bald” (that is, unfeathered) heads, and large brown/black wingspans. It is unlikely that anyone will confuse a VULTURE with another bird.

Other Character Properties

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:

Author Biographies

Dr. Patricia Mateo-Tomás, is a researcher at Biodiversity Research Unit (UMIB, CSIC-UO-PA) of the Oviedo University, Spain. She works on scavenger conservation and ecology, especially of vultures. Dr. Mateo-Tomás leads (together with other researchers, NGOs and public administrations) a project to track griffon vultures with GPS to combat wildlife poaching, including illegal poisoning, a major threat for the guild.

Álvaro Flórez Estrada Public School (polasomi@educastur.org) is a primary school in the town of Pola de Somiedo, Asturias, Spain. Following a school talk about vulture conservation from Dr. Mateo-Tomás the students decided that there should be a vulture emoji and all worked together to contribute to this proposal.

Matumaini (matumainiepd@yahoo.es) is an NGO based in Asturias, Spain that works with **Mwema Street Children Centre-Karatu (MSCCK)**, an education project in Karatu, Tanzania. Students at MSCCK shared their knowledge of Tanzanian vultures with students in Pola de Somiedo and worked together to contribute to this proposal.

After sending an initial draft of the proposal, the team got assistance from Emojination in preparing the final proposal:

Amanda Hickman (amanda@emojination.org) thinks a lot about waste management and definitely thinks there ought to be a VULTURE emoji.

Sarah Burton loves birds.

Christian Krenek (Christian.Krenek@gmail.com) originally had a fear of vultures--but seeing his fellow authors' amazing research on their importance has changed his tune. He grew up in suburban New Jersey, where the specter of "turkey buzzards" quite literally loomed overhead (especially with such small dogs in the neighborhood). He thanks the amazing team who helped create the vulture emoji, and is proud to be a part of their work!