

Proposal for Emoji: NEST

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Date: September 12th, 2019 — Revised March 31st, 2020

1. Identification

- A. CLDR Short Name: NEST
- B. CLDR Keywords: bird, nest, nesting, eggs

2. Images:



Credit: Aphee Messer. Free for use in conjunction with this proposal

3. ZWJ images:



Credit: Aphee Messer. Free for use in conjunction with this proposal

4. ZWJ Sequence: [🐣] + [ZWJ] + [🥚] = 🐣🥚 (Fallback = 🐣🥚)

5. Sort Order: in the PLANT-OTHER category, after LEAF FLUTTERING IN WIND

This proposal was updated 3/31/20 to display an empty nest image, with a ZWJ option to make a nest with one egg.

Abstract

This proposal requests the addition of the BIRD NEST emoji to the Unicode emoji library. One of the most recognizable non-human habitats in the world, the BIRD'S NEST can be found on six continents, and fossil records date its existence to over 23 million years ago. Despite the ubiquitousness of the BIRD NEST, however, there is no existing emoji that comes anywhere close to symbolizing its meaning (the closest is a combination of BIRD and HOUSE), which limits the expression of groups including zoologists, ornithologists, and audubon societies. In addition to these more scientific principles, the word "NEST" has become synonymous with

human activity including pregnancy (the “nesting” instinct) and a stage in parents’ lives when their children move away (“empty nest” syndrome). A BIRD NEST emoji, then, will fill a crucial gap in the semantics of the Unicode emoji library.

Introduction

“The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship.”--William Blake¹

The bird’s nest! That universal symbol of animal homes; the item pointed out on nature hikes; an ingredient in traditional East Asian cooking and medicine; a marvel of avian engineering found across the world. In addition to their use in the scientific and naturalist communities, the idea of a nest as a home and shelter is found in literature, the performing arts, cuisine, and human societies.

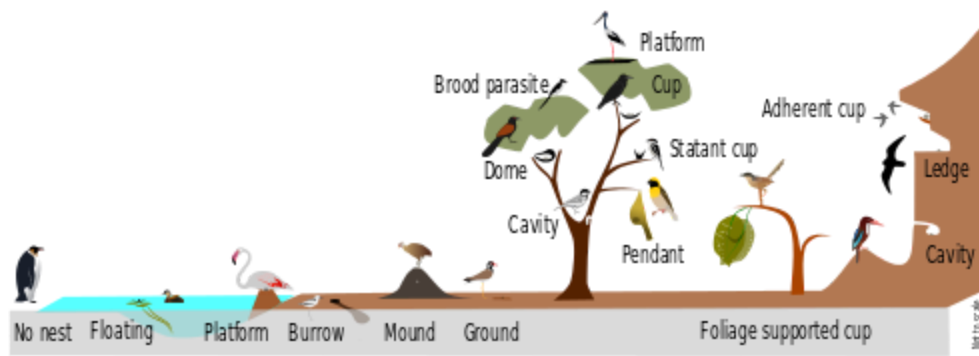
Birds largely use nests as a place to lay and brood their eggs, although some also make homes for themselves in the structures. Some use pre-existing structures, while others are constructed with twigs, leaves, small plants, and human detritus such as twine, garbage, or scraps of fabric. There are nine major types of bird’s nest: the *scrape* (a shallow indentation in the ground); the *mound* (a nest which covers eggs with various compostable material); the *burrow* (which sees eggs sheltered beneath the earth itself); the *cavity* (which uses pre-existing holes in trees); the *cup* (a smooth, rounded structure built from twigs, and probably the most recognizable of all nests); the *saucer* (similar to the cup, but shallower); the *platform* (a large structure built over cliffs or even water, depending on the needs of the bird); the *pendant* (a kind of “hanging basket” nest which dangles from a tree); and the *sphere* (a rounded “ball” that has only a small opening for parent birds to enter and exit).² Birds are fiercely territorial of their nests and babies, although the oft-told warning about touching these items leading to parental abandonment has been proven false.³

¹ https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/william_blake_105253

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bird_nest#Types

³

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/phenomena/2015/06/29/should-you-put-a-baby-bird-back-in-the-nest-depends-if-its-cute/>



An image of various birds and the different styles of nest they create.⁴

While birds' nests are primarily (and quite literally!) "for the birds," humans have also come to use the structures in both the literal and metaphoric sense. The most obvious non-avian usage is *Edible bird's nest soup*, a delicious dish featured in the cuisine of East Asian nations, including China, Indonesia, and Malaysia.⁵ Derived from the nests of the edible-nest swiftlet, this soup has been made for at least four centuries, and is praised for its supposed healing properties.⁶ It is estimated that edible birds' nest harvesting will give 5.2 billion to the Gross National Income of Malaysia by 2020.⁷

Birds' nests have also been used by cultures across the world as symbols of home and safety. An ancient Greek myth tells the story of Alcyone of Thessaly, daughter of Aeolus, god of the winds; after her lover died while sailing, Alcyone threw herself into the sea, prompting the gods to transform the two into kingfishers, which make their nests on the water; the brooding period of a kingfisher on her nest became the root of the phrase "halcyon days," meaning a period of relative peace.⁸ In the Old Testament (used in both Judaism and Christianity), a famous Psalm reminds the faithful that "even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,"⁹ encouraging them to take comfort in God's ability to provide. Natural poets including Robert Frost¹⁰, Edward Thomas¹¹, and John Clare¹² use birds' nests as key symbols in their work. During the apartheid era of South Africa, weaver-bird nests--massive communal structures built by the sociable weaver-bird¹³--were used as metaphors for the possibility of humans working together to build a healthier, anti-apartheid society.¹⁴

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bird_nest#/media/File:Nests.svg

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edible_bird%27s_nest

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ http://ap.fttc.agnet.org/ap_db.php?id=414

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcyone_of_Thessaly

⁹ https://www.openbible.info/topics/bird_nests

¹⁰ <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/exposed-nest>

¹¹ <http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/item/2858>

¹² <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49719/the-yellowhammers-nest>

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociable_weaver

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Color_of_Friendshi



A weaver-bird nest colony in South Africa, used as a symbol of unity during the anti-apartheid movement.

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The ubiquity of the birds' nest as a symbol of home around the world has also shaped human language. *Empty nest syndrome* refers to a feeling of emptiness and grief experienced by parents after their children move away from home; while not a diagnosable medical condition, it can lead to increases in depression, and has been written about by such institutions as the Mayo Clinic.¹⁶ This term is so common that a popular 1980's-90's sitcom, *Empty Nest*, borrowed it to succinctly describe its plot (a widower must face life changes after his wife passes away and daughters move out).¹⁷ A 2008 film with the same title (also known as *Les enfants sont partis*, or "The children have gone"), focuses on the struggles of a married couple as they enter this new stage of their life.¹⁸ As such, the bird's nest is not simply a structure where avian creature lay their eggs: it is one of the most-used symbols for family, togetherness, and home in cultures around the globe.

Selection Factors – Inclusion

Compatibility

Not applicable.

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociable_weaver#/media/File:WebervogelInst_Auoblodge.JPG

¹⁶ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/empty-nest-syndrome/art-20047165>

¹⁷ <http://www.tv.com/shows/empty-nest/>

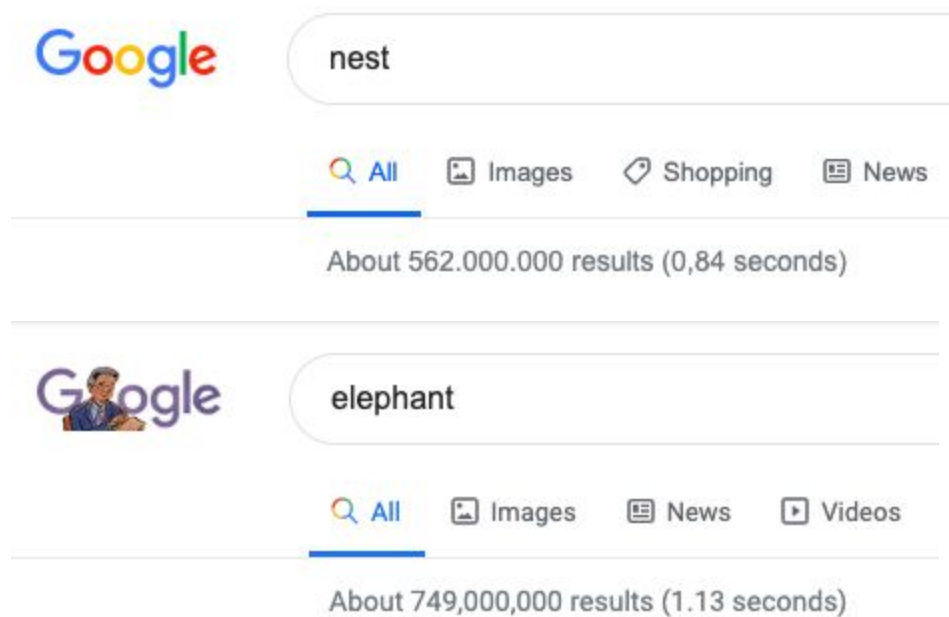
¹⁸ <http://www.tv.com/movies/empty-nest/>

Expected Usage Level

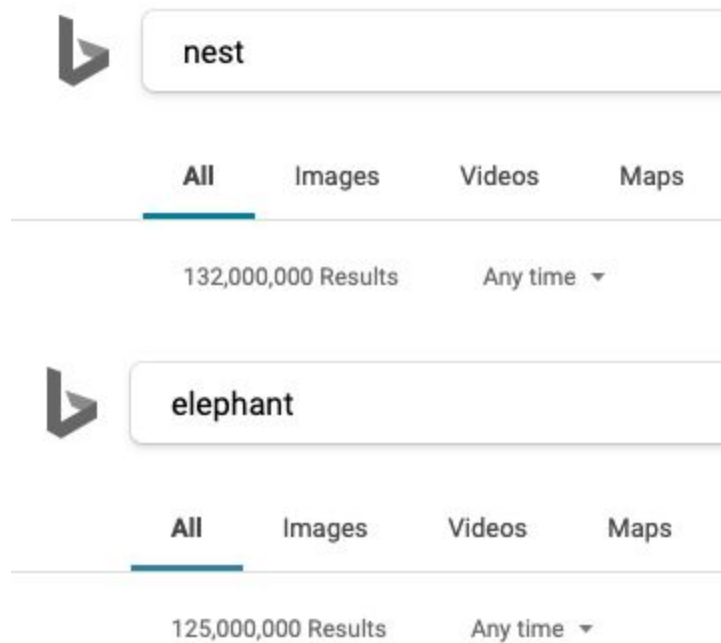
Frequency

I anticipate the usage of BIRD NEST to be relatively high; in addition to nature scholars and bird fans using the term, the word NEST has many connotations, and will appear frequently.

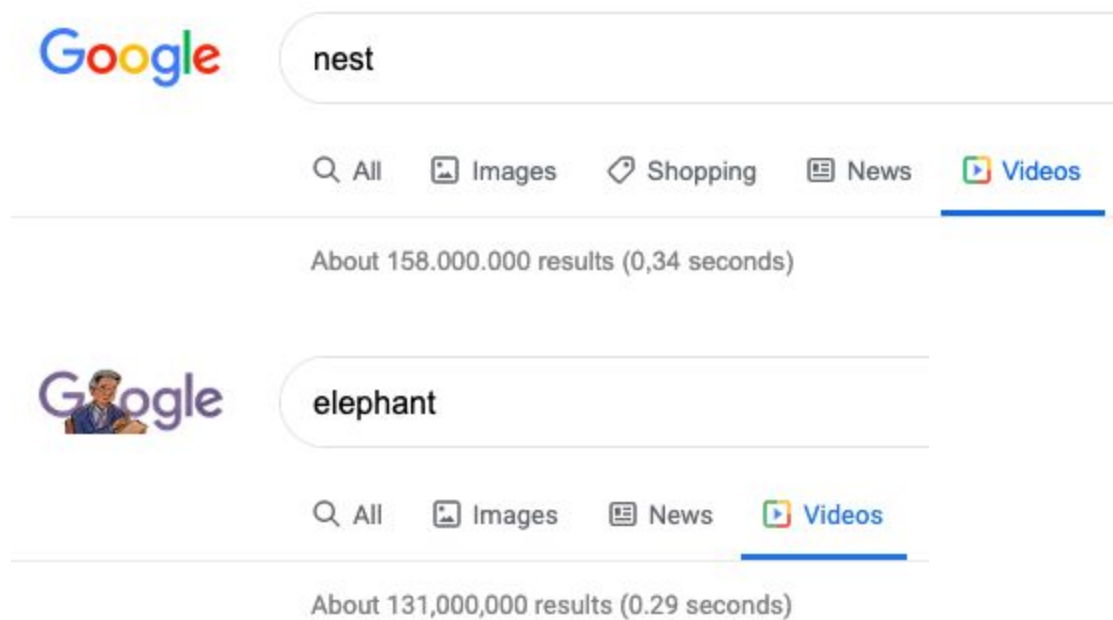
Google Search:



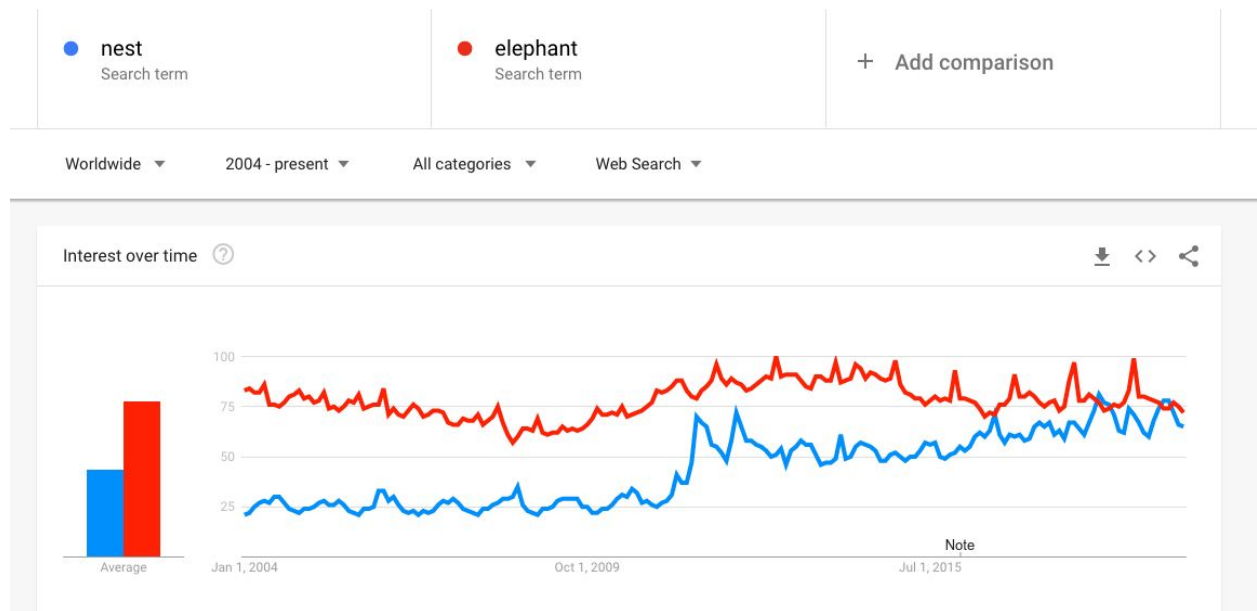
Bing Search:



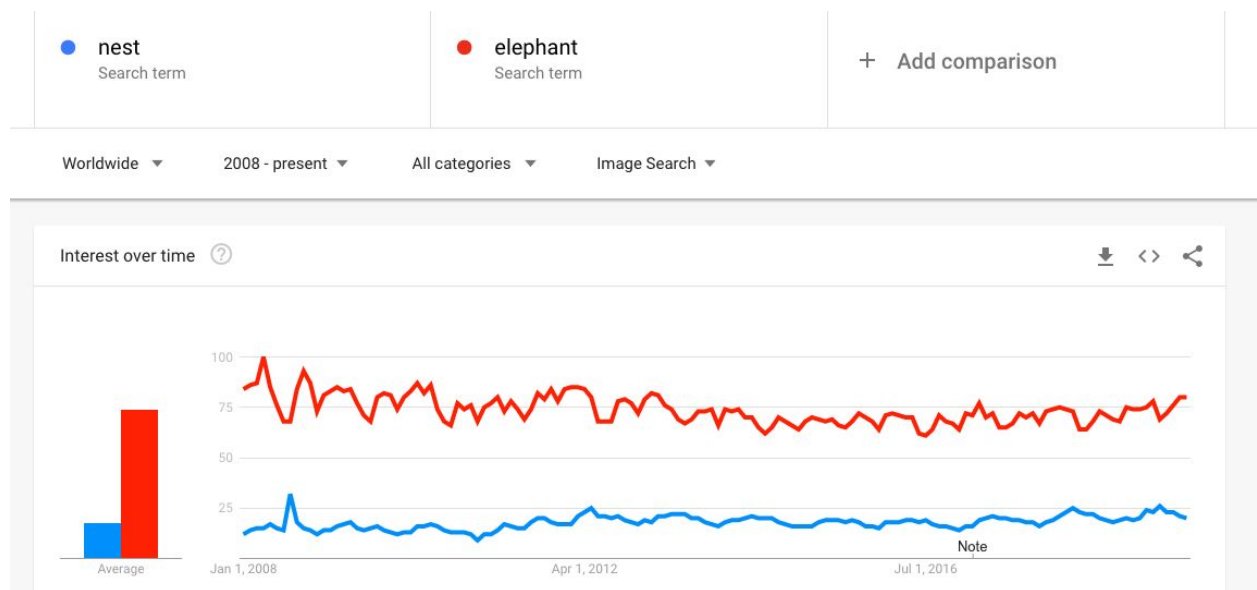
Google Video Search:



Google Trends: Web Search



Google Trends: Image Search

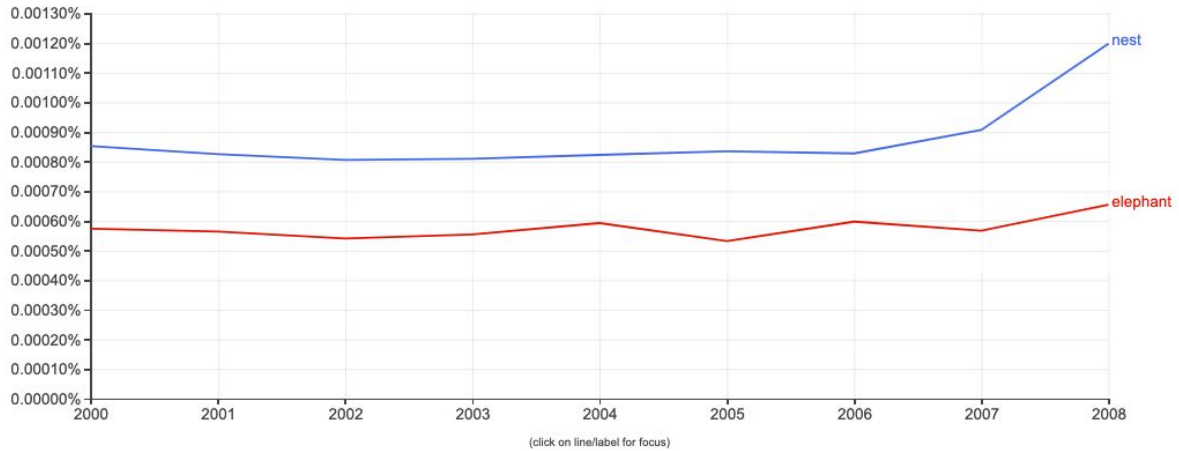


NGram Viewer

ELEPHANT again outperforms BIRD NEST, but the low blue line indicates that the latter did appear in books across the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries!

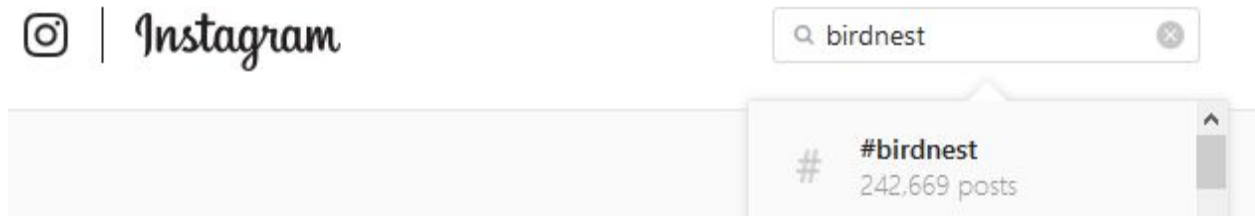
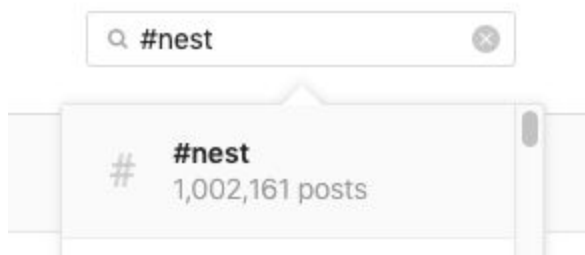
Google Books Ngram Viewer

Graph these comma-separated phrases: ☐ case-insensitive
between and from the corpus with smoothing of [Search lots of books](#)



Instagram Search

ELEPHANT soundly routes NEST in this category, with over 6,000,000 more hashtags available.

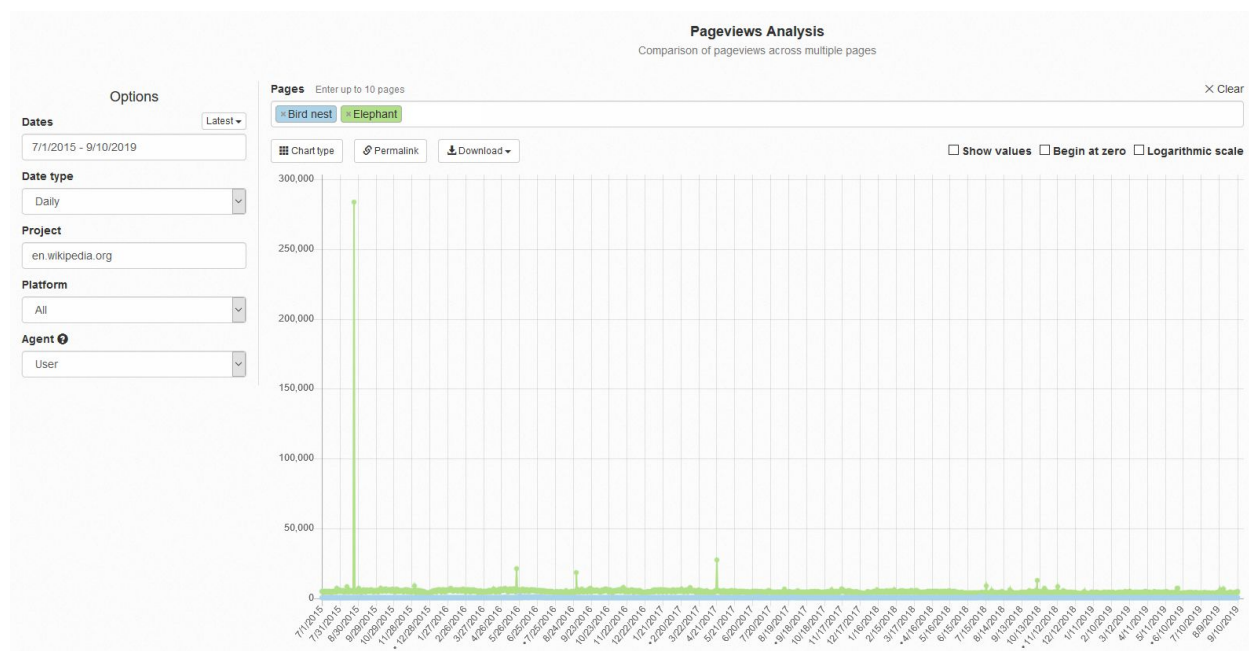




#elephant
6,345,714 posts

Wikipedia Search

Here we see a continued trend from Google comparisons: ELEPHANT has far more page searches than BIRD NEST, but the latter is still searched at a consistent rate across time.



Multiple Usages

The BIRD NEST is one of the universal symbols for “home” in humans. It could be used in phrases such as “empty nest,” “nesting instinct,” and “nest egg.” A BIRD NEST could also be used to symbolize a new home, children returning home for a visit with family (“all the chickens come home to roost”), or a symbol of coziness and comfort.

Use in sequences

While a bird's nest succinctly represents the concept of BIRD and HOME, its more metaphoric uses could be indicated by certain sequences:

BIRD NEST + BOWL OF SOUP (possibly, + CHEF)= BIRD'S NEST SOUP (a traditional dish featured in Chinese, Indonesian, and other East Asian cuisines)

BIRD NEST + Any FAMILY + CRYING FACE= EMPTY NEST SYNDROME (a colloquial term for the feeling of emptiness that comes to parents after their children move away from home for the first time; alternately, the classic 80's sitcom *Empty Nest*)

BIRD NEST + EGG= EGGS IN THE NEST (a delicious breakfast consisting of thick, buttery toast with the center removed, and fried eggs being placed in the hollow, creating the illusion of eggs in a bird's nest)

BIRD NEST + EGG + MONEY = NEST EGG (a colloquial term for a sum of money set aside for retirement purposes)

BIRD NEST + COMPUTER= NESTING (a concept in programming wherein information is placed, or "nested," inside other pieces of information)

Breaking new ground.

There is almost nothing comparable to the BIRD NEST emoji in the current roster--it is an animal habitat, something sorely lacking in all known emoji categories. Indeed, I confess that I did not know whether to place BIRD NEST in the "ANIMAL-BIRD" section or "PLANT-OTHER" section, and ultimately chose the latter as it is not an animal. This points out a rather large gap in the current emoji system, and might be the catalyst to begin such emojis as BEEHIVE, CAVE, or HABITAT, given that both hobbyists (birdwatchers, audubon societies, etc.) and professionals (zookeepers, nature surveyors, conservationists, etc.) could use BIRD NEST and its counterparts.

Image Distinctiveness

As mentioned above, there are no emojis that concisely and accurately represent the idea of BIRD NEST. A NEST is also simple to render in emoji: any rounded structure visibly made of twigs or sticks, possibly with eggs inside, would be instantly recognizable as a BIRD NEST.

Completeness

Not applicable.

Frequently Requested

N/A.

Selection Factors – Exclusion

Overly Specific

Groups that might use the BIRD NEST emoji include ornithologists (scientists who specialize in birds), audubon societies (non-scientific groups that make birds a hobby), birdwatchers, conservation-minded workers, park rangers, chefs specializing in East Asian cuisine (where bird's nest soup is a delicacy and prized for its nutritional value), computer programmers and IT experts ("nesting" is a term used to refer to organizing information in layers), and people on nature walks and hikes. More metaphoric users might include parents suffering from "empty nest" syndrome, their children, and pregnant women (who have a nesting instinct). At the moment, there is no singular emoji that any of these individuals can use to capture the idea of BIRD NEST; creating one will not only help everyone in this group, but possibly open the doors to filling the semantic gaps in the current Unicode emoji library between ANIMAL and PLANT, such as other habitats or particular ecosystems.

Open Ended

While it is true that many birds use different "styles" of BIRD NEST (Wikipedia lists nine major styles, from "scrape" to "sphere"), the proposed emoji, designed in the "cup" style, is the most commonly used (32 of the top results in a Google Image search for "BIRD NEST" are in the cup style).¹⁹ Similarly, books ranging from children's titles (Jorey Hurley's *Nest*)²⁰ to "professional" guides (*Peterson Field Guides: Eastern Birds' Nests*)²¹ use the rounded "cup" NEST on their covers. A cup-style NEST is synonymous with the idea of birds' nests, and will cover all usages of the term; distinctions would be akin to different breeds of cats or dogs being represented by individual emoji, which is unnecessary.

Already Representable

There simply isn't any sort of emoji that represents the singular idea of BIRD NEST. The only thing that could possibly come close is the combination of BIRD and HOUSE, but even this fails to capture the concept, as birdhouses are entirely separate, man-made structures. A BIRD NEST is a distinct entity, and so deserves a distinct emoji.

¹⁹

https://www.google.com/search?q=bird+nest&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj83cT089DgAhWGPN8KHfdTBwYQ_AUIDigB&biw=1920&bih=937

²⁰ <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Nest/Jorey-Hurley/9781481452106>

²¹ <https://www.amazon.com/Peterson-Field-Guide-Eastern-Birds/dp/0395936098>

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

“BIRD NEST” is a universal concept, and as such, no one company or brand has a copyright over it. While there is a “NEST Company,” it specializes in “smart home” products, such as wirelessly connected thermostats, doorbells, and alarms²²; in addition, the NEST Company’s logo is simply the word “NEST” rendered in gray font, eliminating any possibility of confusing a bird’s nest with its products or brand. Similarly, the “BIRDS [sic] NEST Foundation,” a non-profit video production company²³, uses a photo of a robin as a logo, rather than an actual nest. These companies serve as further proof of the term BIRD’S NEST’s ubiquity, but as they are not universally-recognized brands, there is little fear of any sort of confusion.

Wikipedia’s “NEST” (disambiguation) page²⁴ indicates some other uses of the word NEST, including a Finnish band, the names of several minor figures in Welsh history, and a magazine that ceased publication in 2004. None of these people or entities have the universal recognition factor of a bird’s nest.

Transient

The first known BIRD NEST in the fossil record dates to the Early Miocene period, some 23.03 million years ago.²⁵ Birds have building nests since that time, and will certainly be doing so as long as they exist on Earth.

Faulty Comparison

As indicated above, there are no entries under any emoji category, including ANIMALS or PLANTS, that capture the concept of BIRD NEST, either in its literal form (a bird’s nest) or its symbolic uses (empty nest syndrome, nesting instinct, etc.).

Exact Images

Any rounded structure made of twigs (preferably brown, but tan or gray may also be effective) will effectively capture the idea of BIRD NEST. The only possible variation may be a BIRD NEST that contains eggs versus an empty one; in this case, the image of “egg” is easily represented by small round ovals, either white or (appropriately) robin’s egg blue.

²² <https://nest.com/>

²³ <http://birdsneftfoundation.org/>

²⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nest_\(disambiguation\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nest_(disambiguation))

²⁵ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0046972>

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

Christian Krenek (Christian.Krenek@gmail.com) is one of the many iPhone users rumored to be disaffected by the world around him. Despite this, he loves spending time in nature, and has a particularly affinity for birds. He grew up in the Northeastern United States and loved watching birds with his family as a little boy. Like countless other people, he was first introduced to the idea of “animal homes” with bird’s nests, and has happy childhood memories of watching robins build one such nest in his backyard. The thought of our feathered friends not having their homes represented with an emoji makes him sad.