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Birds Aren't Real

Birds Aren't Real is a satirical conspiracy theory which posits that birds are actually drones operated by the United States government to spy on American citizens.^{[2][3][4][5]} In 2018, journalist Rachel Roberts described Birds Aren't Real as "a joke that thousands of people are in on".^[3]

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Billboard in Memphis, Tennessee, 2019^[1]

Background

Peter McIndoe (born 1997/1998) created the satirical conspiracy theory "on a whim" in Memphis, Tennessee, in January 2017.^{[2][6]} In 2017, he posted on Facebook: "I made a satirical movement a few months ago, and people on Instagram seem to like it a lot." He later disclaimed the post, saying it was written by a staffer who was fired,^[3] and did not admit until 2021 that he did not truly believe the conspiracy.^{[2][6]} The movement first attracted attention during the 2017 Women's March at the University of Arkansas, at which McIndoe and other supporters appeared carrying anti-bird signs.^[3]

The movement argues that all birds in the United States were exterminated by the federal government between 1959 and 1971, and replaced by drones; the specifics of these theories as reported in news articles are not always consistent, not unlike actual conspiracy theories. They claim that birds sit on power lines to recharge themselves, and that bird poop on cars is a tracking method. The theory states that U.S. president John F. Kennedy was assassinated by the government due to his reluctance to kill all the birds.^{[4][7][8]}

Activities

In December 2021, *The New York Times* featured the movement and its founder Peter McIndoe.^[2]

On January 5, 2022, the US Government responded by tweeting via the US Consumer Product Safety Commission's official account, "Birds are real."^[9]

On January 6, 2022, McIndoe threw up during a live TV interview with the Chicago-based WGN9.^{[10][11]} Adweek called it an "apparent prank"^[12] and McIndoe labeled it a "hit job".^[13]

Supporters

Some supporters have demonstrated with signs stating "Birds Aren't Real" and related slogans.^[3]

In 2019, a billboard was erected stating "Birds Aren't Real" in Memphis, Tennessee.^[1] McIndoe has used media bothsidesism to promote Birds Aren't Real, once saying he was offended by a question of the movement was satirical, as such a question would not be asked of the opposite opinion (that birds are real).^[3] In 2021, he stated that he works full-time as a spokesperson for the movement, making money from sales of merchandise.^[3] In 2021, some supporters demonstrated in front of Twitter's San Francisco headquarters demanding that the company change its bird logo.^[2] MSNBC wrote that there are hundreds of thousands of members.^[14]

See also

- Bielefeld conspiracy, another satirical conspiracy theory
- Détournement
- Culture jamming

References

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Poster inspired by the movement at the 2018 35C3 conference in Leipzig, Germany

^[2] MSNBC wrote

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External links

- [Official website \(https://birdsarentreal.com/\)](https://birdsarentreal.com/)
 - [Interview with Peter McIndoe in *The Guardian* \(https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/14/the-lunacy-is-getting-more-intense-how-birds-arent-real-took-on-the-conspiracy-theorists\)](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/14/the-lunacy-is-getting-more-intense-how-birds-arent-real-took-on-the-conspiracy-theorists)
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This page was last edited on 2 May 2022, at 03:49 (UTC).

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