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News Item

Birds Aren’t Real, or Are They? Inside a Gen Z Conspiracy Theory. | The New York Times

By Taylor Lorenz
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> In Pittsburgh, Memphis and Los Angeles, massive billboards recently popped up declaring, “Birds Aren’t Real.”
> On Instagram and TikTok, Birds Aren’t Real accounts have racked up hundreds of thousands of followers, and YouTube videos about it have gone viral.
> Last month, Birds Aren’t Real adherents even protested outside Twitter’s headquarters in San Francisco to demand that the company change its bird logo.
> The events were all connected by a Gen Z-fueled conspiracy theory, which posits that birds don’t exist and are really drone replicas installed by the U.S. government to spy on Americans. Hundreds of thousands of young people have joined the movement, wearing Birds Aren’t Real T-shirts, swarming rallies and spreading the slogan.
> It might smack of QAnon, the conspiracy theory that the world is controlled by an elite cabal of child-trafficking Democrats. Except that the creator of Birds Aren’t Real and the movement’s followers are in on a joke: They know that birds are, in fact, real and that their theory is made up.
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