



Lawsuit: Crime victims illegally deported by U.S.

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Abilene Reporter-News

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Once-rare species make surprising recovery



The merlin is a falcon, a little smaller than a pigeon, that eats other birds. Their population plummeted due to exposure to the pesticide DDT, until the United States and Canada began restricting DDT in the early 1970s. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Tom Langen Clarkson University | THE CONVERSATION

When I started bird-watching as a teenager, a few years after the first Earth Day in 1970, several species that once thrived in my region were nowhere to be found.

Some, like the passenger pigeon, were extinct. Others had retreated to more remote, wild areas of North America. In many cases, humans had destroyed their habitat by cutting down forests, draining wetlands and converting grasslands to agriculture. Pesticides such as DDT, air and water pollution, and the shooting of birds added to the drop in numbers.

Birds are still declining across the continent. A recent study of 529 species found their numbers fell nearly 30% from 1970 to 2017. In 2025, nearly one-third of all North American bird species are declining; 112 bird species have lost more than half their population in the past 50 years.

Yet, half a century after I started birding, I am starting to see a few long-missing species reappear as I ride my bike from my home through the village and surrounding farmland in rural New York.

What has brought these species back while others are disappearing?

In some cases, like the bald eagle, state wildlife officials have reintroduced the birds.

But others have returned on their own as habitat protection and restoration, the elimination of certain pesticides, and a shift away from shooting raptors and other large birds made the region less threatening for them.

As a wildlife biologist, I believe their return is a testament to conservation and the positive effect of reversing harms to the natural environment. Here are three examples.

Merlin: Pesticides' collateral damage

The merlin is a falcon, a little smaller than a pigeon, that eats other birds.

Until the 1970s, merlins primarily bred in the vast coniferous forests of the far north. But in the early 1970s, they began nesting in Saskatoon, in Saskatchewan, Canada. Twenty years later, the city had 30 nests. Soon, merlins were breeding in towns across Canada's prairie provinces, then spreading east into the cities and towns of eastern Canada and the north-eastern United States.

In Ontario, merlin populations have increased 3.5% per year over the past half-century, an explosive rate of increase.

Where I live in the Saint Lawrence Valley of New York, nearly every village has a pair nesting in an old crow nest at the top of a tall Norway spruce tree today. The loud ki-ki-kee of a territorial pair becomes a familiar sound when they're in the area.

Why did merlin populations grow and spread so rapidly?

Exposure to the pesticide DDT in the 1960s weakened the shells of eggs laid by merlins and other raptors, and fewer of



The return of the pileated woodpecker is good for other species, too, as several birds and mammals benefit from the large tree cavities that the woodpeckers excavate. GETTY IMAGES

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their chicks survived. Their numbers plummeted as a result. When the United States and Canada began restricting DDT – and other pesticides – in the early 1970s, it was possible for merlins to successfully breed once again in areas with extensive agriculture.

The indiscriminate shooting of birds of prey like the merlin has also declined. In the late 1800s, with farmers upset

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Judge orders Pentagon to return banned books

Nearly 600 titles affected by department's actions

BrieAnna J. Frank
USA TODAY

A federal judge in Virginia has ordered the Pentagon to restore books and curricula that were removed from its schools following efforts by the Trump administration to weed out perceived “wokeness” from the military and education.

The American Civil Liberties Union sued the Department of War, formally the Department of Defense, in April on behalf of six military families who objected to the actions taken at schools in the Department of Defense Education Activity in the weeks after President Donald Trump's inauguration.

More than 67,000 students attend classes at schools in the DoDEA in the United States and 11 other countries.

U.S. District Judge Patricia Tolliver Giles' Oct. 20 ruling is only on a preliminary injunction the ACLU requested in May, meaning it is in place as litigation continues and only applies to the five schools attended by the children involved in the lawsuit.

The department was ordered both to “immediately restore the library books and curricular materials” removed since Jan. 19 and barred from any further removals.

Tolliver Giles previously ordered that the list of nearly 600 books affected by the department's actions be made public. They included “A is for Activist” by Innosanto Nagara, “Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender) Teen” by Jazz Jennings and “From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation” by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor.

The ACLU called the Oct. 20 ruling an “important victory.”

“The censorship taking place in DoDEA schools as a result of these executive orders was astonishing in its scope and scale, and we couldn't be

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Man dies in parking lot crash in Abilene

Trish Choate

Abilene Reporter-News
USA TODAY NETWORK – TEXAS

A man was pronounced dead after a collision Monday in a convenience store parking lot, Abilene police said in a media release.

The police investigation into the fatal crash that killed Jamony Latimore, 31, of

Oklahoma is ongoing, police said.

Just before 9 p.m. Monday, police responded to the 2800 block of Overland Trail in north Abilene for a report of a crash, police said. A 2022 silver Hyundai Elantra driven by Latimore hit a trailer parked in the parking lot of the convenience store.

Reports indicate Latimore was parked for an extended time when he accelerated

and hit the parked trailer, police said.

Latimore's body will be taken for autopsy, police said.

Trish Choate is the executive editor for the Wichita Falls Times Record News, San Angelo Standard-Times and Abilene Reporter-News. Contact Trish with news tips at tchoate@gannett.com. Read her recent work here. Her X handle is @Trish-apedia.

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