

# American Pickers to film in Minnesota, looking for extraordinary items

## Press Release

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Mike Wolfe, Frank Fritz, and their team are excited to return to Minnesota. They plan to film episodes of the hit series *American Pickers* throughout the local area in October 2019.

"American Pickers" is a documentary series that explores the fascinating world of antique "picking" on History. The hit show follows Mike and Frank, two of the most skilled pickers in the business, as they hunt for America's most valuable antiques. They are always excited to find sizable, unique collections and learn the interesting stories behind them.

As they hit the back roads from coast to coast, Mike and Frank are on a mission to recycle and rescue forgotten relics. Along the way, the Pickers want to meet char-



acters with remarkable and exceptional items. The pair hopes to give historically significant objects a new lease on life while learning a thing or two about America's past along the way.

Mike and Frank have seen a lot of rusty gold over the years and are always looking to discover something they've never seen before. They are ready to find extraordinary items and hear fascinating tales about them. "American Pickers" is looking for leads and would love to explore local hidden treasure. If you or someone you know has a large, private collection or accumulation of antiques that the Pickers can spend the better part of the day looking through, send them your name, phone number, location and description of the collection with photos at:

americanpickers@cineflix.com or call 855-OLD-RUST. Facebook: @GotAPick

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### Ducks

of swampland. Along this remote stretch of highway, a rare landmark dots the road's corridor. But since the summer of 2017, a new bit of color has joined the trees, grass and water that line the road. Located four miles south of Jack's Shack bar and the intersection with Hwy. 27, a ditch has become home to a number of ducks – the painted, artificial kind, that is. Since they were featured on *Kare11* in June of this year, the flock has only grown. Ditch Duck originator Joanne Ledin hopes that the ducks can continue to be a roadside oddity into the future.

Ledin, along with her boyfriend and collaborator Jeff Sutton, lives in Blaine, but the couple makes regular trips up Hwy. 65 to visit Sutton's family cabin the McGregor area. Sutton has been visiting the McGregor community since he was young, and the cabin was purchased around 2015. Ledin explained that she had a habit of mistaking a log for a turtle when the couple passed the waterlogged ditch on their way to McGregor. "[Jeff] said he was going to paint a duck yellow and set it out there so I'd know it wasn't a turtle," she said. "And, obviously, he did it, and it's turned into a giant flock now."

The second duck made an appearance in the ditch about a month or so after Ledin and Sutton set the first one out. Over the first year, Ledin said the ducks built up slowly, and about 25 were in the ditch by the time the couple removed them. The second year, the ducks more than doubled, with around 80 accumu-



lating. Growth has continued this year, and Ledin guessed there were over 100 now.

"It's all fun," Ledin said. "It always brings me a stupid smile when we drive by." And she was hopeful the tradition of the ducks was something that could continue. "Hearing all the stories of why people have put them out there is extremely touching. Knowing that kids love it and look forward to it, and adults as well, always brings me a giddy school girl smile when we go by it." Ledin cited a wide range of reasons she had heard for people bringing ducks to the ditch: in honor of lost loved ones, pets, those serving in the military, and favorite sports teams. "It's humbling to hear the stories," Ledin said. "And we can take care of them, and they can keep seeing them. It's just awesome."

When it came to managing and taking care of the ducks, Ledin said that she and Sutton were primarily responsible for it. "Since we started it, we take care of it," she said. The couple goes out with a canoe to remove the ducks at the end of fall, "right before it gets nasty cold," Ledin said.

She noted that Sutton has had to chip the ducks out of two inches of ice in the past. The two now watch the weather to make sure the ducks are out before freezing is predicted. The collection is then stored in bags at the pair's property. They also work to keep the ducks in good condition for floating, mending them and replacing the weight and string, if necessary, before they are placed back in the ditch in the spring.

Ledin noted that many people took their own initiative adding ducks to the ditch, and she wasn't aware of every duck that got put in. She and Sutton did get questions about making sure the duck was the right weight to float and on the depth of the ditch (which Ledin placed at around five and a half feet). "Otherwise, there's not any rules or anything," Ledin added. "We put one out, and it grew into a giant flock."

And there are a wide range of stories contained within that flock. Karen Satter, of Pine City, explained her own contribution: "We first we saw the story of the ditch ducks on the news. On our way back from a graduation party, we just happened to drive

by there and promptly turned around to take a look. I thought it was pretty cool. I told my husband that we should put one in there for our son, Jordan (we lost him 6 years ago). Todd loved the idea and told me that he had a duck that he bought at a garage sale for some reason. We both painted it up and released our duck. It was a great feeling to do this. I felt like there was a part of our son there now too. I have family that lives north of there and lots of friends that have cabins in the area. They are excited to check the ditch ducks."

Thus far, Ledin said she has not received any complaints about the ducks, whether from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, local law enforcement or the DNR. She and Sutton had come across a conservation officer while out duck hunting in the local area. The subject of the Hwy. 65 ducks did come up, Ledin said, and the officer was not fond of them. "He called them garbage," she recalled. However, she added that she and Sutton had not been told to remove them. "We've heard nothing," she said, "which is a good



**Todd and Karen Satter, of Pine City, release a duck in honor of their son, Jordan, who passed away in 2013.**

thing."

Safety was a prominent concern for Ledin. "The only thing we worry about is hoping to God no one gets hurt," she said. If any injury were to result from the ducks, she said would immediately put an end to bringing them to the ditch. "And I'm sure the DNR or MnDOT would as well," she added. She urged people to be mindful and stay safe if they brought a duck to the ditch. "It's only a single lane highway," she said. "There isn't really a shoulder to pull over onto." Just a short distance north of the ditch, there is a side road, and Ledin guessed many people were parking there and walking back to the ditch.

If someone wants to put a duck out, Ledin advised making sure the duck would float. "Otherwise, they will sink," she said, "and at that point, they can become pollution. If we can't see them, we can't pick them up." She also recommended anchoring them with sturdy string and weight as well as not gluing anything on that might fall off. "We want to keep this

as environmentally safe as possible," she said.

Ledin and Sutton have created a public Facebook group for the ducks: Ditch Ducks (Highway 65). The group is open to anyone who wants to join, and any current member can approve new members. The group acts as a hub for keeping tabs on the ducks, and members can ask questions about placing a duck. Ledin did note the page is moderated, and negativity and advertising will be deleted.

The swamplands of southeast Aitkin have little in the way of landmarks. Such landmarks are reference points. They help orient people and communities in a much larger world. While the drive from McGrath to McGregor once offered uninterrupted vistas of woodland and swamp, what started as a small joke between a passing couple has blossomed into a new landmark, one in which Ledin and Sutton have inadvertently shaped and fostered a community around a makeshift flock of decoy ducks, sitting in a swampland ditch.