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Swim-In 2011: Amphicar Owners Invade Celina, Ohio

It's a car! It's a boat! It's a 40-year-old, twin-screw chunk of automotive folly!

Posted by [Andrew Wendler](#) Tuesday, July 26, 2011 5:05:07 AM



It's been a banner month here in northwestern Ohio for aficionados of small, quirky vehicles from long-defunct manufacturers. Just two short weeks ago, I brought you the latest in diminutive vintage tin from the [National Crosley Club Meet](#) in Wauseon, Ohio. This week, I've traveled approximately 85 miles south to meet up with a band of equally

nutty and obsessed enthusiasts on the shores of Grand Lake St. Marys in Celina, Ohio.

Pleasant as Celina may be, it's the lake that seals the deal for this gang -- because without the H₂O to float them, even the largest annual gathering of Amphicars in the nation is just another car show.

Amphicars were built in West Germany from 1961 to 1968; total production is generally regarded to be 3,878 vehicles, with 3,046 of those imported into the U.S.

between 1961 and 1967. The first round of regulations by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Transportation Department prevented any from being imported legally in 1968. The factory unofficially designated all Amphicars a model number "770," the nomenclature derived from the fact that its top speed was 7 knots in the water and 70 mph on land. Amphicars are constructed of mild steel -- many of the uninitiated erroneously assume the body is fiberglass -- and power comes from a



rear-mounted 1.1-liter Triumph Herald engine churning out an adequate 43 horsepower and returning 35 mpg on land.



Blasted by a week of 95-plus-degree temperatures and random torrential downpours, many attendees of this year's official meeting of the International Amphicar Owners Club shoved off before we arrived on Sunday morning. Despite the weather, several diehards were still milling about, and a fellow who identified himself only as “Ron from New

Hampshire” simply said, “Get in.” With that, we piled into a borrowed Amphicar and rolled down the boat-launch ramp directly into the drink. The ride was dry, stable and remarkably drama-free, exactly the opposite of the impression one gets watching an Amphicar from shore. Check out the exclusive high-definition videos below.

The most shocking thing about the Amphicar is not how much a new old-stock transmission can set you back (\$15,000), nor is it the fact that its electrical system is primarily of Lucas design and components (shudder). No, the biggest news in the Amphicar world is the skyrocketing value of the cars. When new, the cars retailed for between \$2,800 and \$3,300. After the company went kaput, many people purchased remaining models off dealer lots for significantly less. Fully functional Amphicars could be found in the \$3,000 range well into the early 1990s. Sadly, all that bargain-priced fun came to a screeching halt one fateful day in 2006 at a Barrett-Jackson auction, when a fully restored 1964 Amphicar sold for an eye-popping ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOUR THOUSAND DOLLARS! Granted, prices have corrected themselves down to the mid 5-figure range since those heady “buy now, think later”



days, but if you're clipping coupons to make it till payday, an Amphicar is probably not in your immediate future.

[VIDEO 1 LINK](#) (clickable link)

[VIDEO 2 LINK](#) (clickable link)