

A 'Dub invasion': Volkswagens storm through Crescent City

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A seemingly endless line of German vintage, air-cooled Volkswagen cars and vans overtook the California-Oregon border this past Sunday, July 21.

The VW enthusiasts enjoyed a stopover with the local car club, the Del Norte Dubs, during a 10-day annual trek from the Canadian to the Mexican border, known as the “Highway 1 Treffen” (German for “meeting”).

The Crescent City leg of the journey included an auto show at the Del Norte County Fairgrounds aptly titled the “North Coast Dub Invasion.”

Del Norte Dubs president Paul Gelinas said that for the past five years, the local car club, numbering about a dozen members, has hosted the Treffen as it passed through town. This year, it became an official, sponsored event.

The Del Norte Dubs grew out of a Facebook group of local Volkswagen owners. Five years ago, the Dubs started hosting a barbecue as a chance to get together with fellow VW owners for a good time, not really an official car show.

As that grew, other clubs started referring to the Dubs as a fellow car club ... so that's what they became.

Look them up: they're always adding new members. The only requirement is a love of Volkswagens, especially air-cooled models.

Gelinas took the wheel as president some three years ago. He coordinated with the Ventura, California-based company Airhead Parts to make the Treffen-Dubs meetings happen.

Having grown in size each year, last year's event was so big — 130 cars in-show — they had to find a larger venue this year, which led to renting the fairgrounds for a day.

With 138 cars on display this year, Gelinas said, he could see hosting the event at the fairgrounds again in 2020, although it's a bit early for planning.

"Sponsorships are coming in, helping us defer costs," he said. "We do the show and feed everybody that attends. I think we cooked 240 pounds of tri-tip.

"In years past, that was all out of our own pocket. The venue is so much, the food bill is so much, (so) we truly could not have done it without the sponsors. I can't stress that enough."

The Treffen participants typically stay at The Curly Redwood Lodge as they pass through, having been referred to it a decade ago. Others camp in their vans at Mill Creek, some stay at the homes of Dubs members at their homes.

They meet up to see the sights and put on a show.

Gelinas says the Volkswagen community is tightly knit, all about helping each other enjoy the vehicles they love.

Gelinas got his first VW at age 16, a 1974 Beetle. Since then, he's owned a variety of models.

He recently restored a Squareback, after stepping away from the cars for a decade. He sold it this past September and has another restoration project now underway.

Gelinas said there are many reasons to be a Volkswagen fan, including the simplicity of its design, which makes it a very accessible vehicle to rebuild or work on for the amateur mechanic.

"You'll never forget a ride in a Volkswagen — ever," Gelinas said. "The way the car sounds, the way it smells. A lot of people really get into that.

"Once you get into Volkswagens, you're never the same. And you always go back to them."

