

## **AUSTRIA: River adventures instil a sense of wonder in the Danube**

Children were the focus for Danube Day 2006 with events capturing the imagination of youngsters across Austria. Pupils were introduced to the river's amazing wildlife paradise and brought face-to-face with spectacular creatures.

This year's focus was the stunning plants and animals, particularly fish, found in the Danube. 11 river safaris to the Lobau transported pupils to another world: from the Vienna cityscape to an almost untouched natural haven that evoked a sense of wilderness in even the most streetwise child. The largest complete riverine habitat in Central Europe, children were stunned by the area's beauty, home to the Danube Crested Newt (*Triturus dobrogicus*), the severely threatened Fire-bellied Toad (*Bombina bombina*), herons, Kingfishers (*Alcedo atthis*), White Storks (*Ciconia ciconia*) and White-tailed Eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*).

Celebrations saw the launch of a major new education kit, the Danube Box, by Josef Pröll (Environment Minister), Ulli Sima (Vienna Environment Councillor) and Phillip Weller of the ICPDR. Developed by a team of expert educators with support from Coca-Cola and the Pedagogical Institute Vienna, the kit provides a visually eye-catching and imaginative stimulus for learning about the Danube, now available in 18,000 Austrian schools. A poster and information pack was also sent out to every school in Austria, reaching 260,000 students, and results from 8000 school questionnaires were announced.

A now annual celebration, this year's IAD (International Association for Danube Research) cycle tour went one step - and many pedals - further by extending to Győr in Hungary for the first time. The *Three Nations* Vienna - Bratislava - Győr trip gave 70 journalists, environmentalists, school children and cycling enthusiasts from six countries the chance to enjoy the Danube landscape, hear lectures from wetlands experts and share experiences.

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**Danube Day: more than just water!**

For general information view [www.danubeday.org](http://www.danubeday.org) or email: [jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org](mailto:jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org).



Danube Day succeeded in spreading the Danube message to a vast number of Austrian children, helping to ensure the next generation of Danube users think and act for their rivers. It also provided remarkable pieces of natural art works – one of them possibly will be the Danube Art Master 2006 - and memorable adventures for the young and not so young!

**“Danube Day is a tribute to the vital role the river plays in people’s lives: in providing water, power, recreation and livelihoods.”**

Josef Pröll, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water, Austria

### **Partners**

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment & Water • City of Vienna • Vienna Waterworks (MA 31) • International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) • Distelverein (DEF National Focal Point) • International Association for Danube Research (IAD) • Austrian Committee of the IAD • IG-Fahrrad • Coca-Cola Austria • Pedagogical Institute Vienna • Via Donau – Österreichische Wasserstraßen Gesellschaft •

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