



## Danube Day 2009 in Hungary

### Getting wet to help the “Giants” of the Danube

Hungary’s sixth Danube Day was celebrated all along the Danube – in Dunasziget, Szigetköz, Lipót and Budapest in the north and in Sióagárd and Baja in the south. Official meetings combined with fun activities to entertain, educate and enthral, spreading the Danube Day message across the country.

This year’s main event took place at **Dunasziget** in the Szigetköz inland delta area upstream of Győr with a **public celebration and official programme**. Imre Szabo, Environment Minister; Andor Nagy, Chair of the Parliament Environment Committee; Laszlo Kothay, State Secretary for Water; and Philip Weller, Director of the ICPDR, got right to the heart of things wading into the river to release young sturgeon into the Zátonyi Danube. With puppet shows, a children’s dance festival, a regional fish cooking competition, welcome bike ride, picnic by the river and a day of fun activities for youngsters organised by the Danube Museum, there was something for all the family and the event attracted over 900 people. Visitors put on their dancing shoes for traditional folk dancing led by the *Kislaptáros band* as well as more modern music and dance from the *Hen House Blues Band* and the internationally acclaimed *4 for Dance* group.

Visitors learned about environmental projects in the Danube Basin, and the Szigetköz area in particular, including measures being taken to protect sturgeon habitat. Presentations by the Minister and other high level politicians and officials gave a high profile to Danube Day. They jointly held a press conference, which attracted good media coverage. Organised by the Ministry of Environment and Water and the Szigetköz Nature Protection Association, a conference on riparian tourism took place simultaneously.

As part of the Dunasziget event, the culmination of the **Danube Art Master** competition was held with the crowning of the young Hungarian Art Master for 2009. This international schools competition, overseen by the Danube Environmental Forum, challenged every pupil in the Basin to create a piece of environmental art inspired by their local river.

**Budapest** paid tribute to the Danube with an exhibition of the winning photographs from the 2008 International Friends of Nature (IFN) **Danube Photo Competition** at the Green Gallery of the Ministry of Environment and Water (co-organised by GWP Hungary). Over 500 visitors viewed the exhibition, which was officially opened by State Secretary, Kóthay László, at the launch of Danube Day.

Danube Day also formed part of a 30-day, Italy to Hungary cycling extravaganza, **Green Bikes for Peace**, organised by the Hungarian Cyclists’ Club (MK - Magyar

Kerékpárosklub). The 5-country project drew attention to sustainability issues and highlighted Danube Day during its Austrian stretch. Once in Hungary, the tour undertook a variety of exciting events: a costumed bicycle parade and evening of eco-theatre and music on the banks of the Mosoni-Danube in Győr; a local food market in Budapest; NGO projects; cycling workshops and the unveiling of a giant sturgeon statue! Pécs was the final destination where a parade to the city and a *Magic Garden Street Ball* (including workshops, dance, music, masquerade ball and much revelry). The event was truly sustainable with energy produced from cycling used to power the concerts at each stop-over.

In the south, the River Sió joined in the festivities with **fish soup cooking at Sióagárd** near Szekszárd (organised by the Middle Trans-Danubian Environment & Water Directorate). 180 visitors were treated to some of the best fish soup in Hungary; tested their river knowledge in a Danube quiz; enjoyed traditional folk music and even tried out a bit of mid-summer fire jumping. **Baja** also toasted the Danube, with its own Danube Art Master competition. Other plans for Danube Day had to be cancelled because of flooding.

In a basin-wide initiative, the sound of ship horns reverberated across the Basin at 14:00 on Danube Day as Danube workers paid a very special tribute to their river. The annual **Greet the Danube horn blast**, organised by the Global Water Partnership, saw ships along the Danube from Germany to Ukraine simultaneously sound their horns in a salute to the rivers. Radio waves also made Danube waves with Danube-themed activities led by the **Hungarian Amateur Radio Society**.

**“The fitting together of the Danube puzzle pieces symbolizes the interdependence of Danube countries and their potential for cooperation.”**

Andor Nagy, Chair of the Environmental Committee of the Hungarian Parliament.

### **Danube Day Partners**

Ministry of Environment and Water; Szigetköz Nature Protection Association; the 12 Environmental and Water Directorates, Municipalities of the Szigetköz area; Central Transdanubian Environment and Water Directorate; Central Transdanubian Nature Environment and Water Inspectorate; Municipalities of Bogyiszló, Szekszárd, Sióagárd, Kölesd, Zomba and Tengelic; Danube Environmental Forum (DEF); BITE Baja Youth Nature Protection Society; Danube Museum; Global Water Partnership Hungary (GWP); Green Bikes for Peace; Hungarian Cyclists' Club; International Friends of Nature (IFN); Coca-Cola Beverages Magyarország; Duna TV; Hungarian Amateur Radio Society and local schools and kindergartens.

### **Shared Waters – Joint Responsibilities**

For general information about the 14-country Danube Day celebrations, view [www.danubeday.org](http://www.danubeday.org) or email the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR): [jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org](mailto:jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org).