

Danube Day 2013 in Ukraine



Inspiration and action on the Borzhava and Uzh rivers

Danube Day in Ukraine contained some big numbers in 2013! One action in Uzhgorod reached an estimated 17,000 people. A clean-up operation on 50m of the Borzhava cleared a massive 125 cubic metres of plastic, 15 tonnes of glass and 10 tonnes of debris! A huge 250kg wooden cross was erected on Mount Stoy. Whilst a record breaking photographic exhibition in Uzhgorod spanned 144m! The eye-catching statistics and positive action for the Danube rivers achieved widespread media coverage.

High up in the Carpathians, the communities of the **Borzhava River** gathered to celebrate the **restoration and mapping of their river's source**. The start of a 6-year action to mark all the key Tisza tributaries in the country, it follows on from the 5-country commemoration of the Tisza source in 2011. Each year, one source will be located and restored: 2013 saw the turn of the Borzhava. The exact point near Mount Stoy in Svalyavsky rayon was marked with a commemorative tablet. A huge 250 kg wooden cross was carried into the mountains and erected close to the source, overlooking stunning views of the valley. Residents celebrated their hard work with a community BBQ. The event was a good opportunity to get people talking and planning for a sustainable future for the river. Discussions centred on ways to cooperate over flooding and pollution.

Downstream, the Borzhava was given a 'new lease of life' in a **major clean-up exercise**. For too long the beautiful river had been clogged up with thousands of plastic bottles. Until recently 18 such 'plastic dams' jammed the river, squeezing out wildlife and creating a hideous scar in the landscape. The collection of debris from upstream had become so much, it filled the entire channel in parts. During Danube Day, 125 cubic metres of plastic, 15 tonnes of glass and 10 tonnes of other debris was mechanically removed from the river at **Kvasovo village in Beregivsky rayon**, to be recycled. Before and after scenes were widely covered by media, demonstrating how working together in a small way can achieve so much. The coverage was important in visually highlighting to upstream villages the consequences of inconsiderate rubbish disposal.

"My dream is that all of us will see the river - not as a run-off ditch or a place for our rubbish - but as a living creature, who has a right to live... and which also provides life itself, including you and me!"

Volodymyr Chipak, Head of the Ukrainian Tisza Basin Authority.

Whilst clearance was underway, 200 representatives of environmental bodies and communities from across the region met at Kvasovo to **discuss the environmental state of the Transcarpathian rivers**, share best practice and highlight benefits of a **new municipal waste management system**. Promoting recycling, the system has been supported by an EU project, 'Waste Governance – ENPI East' & Coca-Cola Beverages, Ukraine.

Fun educational activities were also on offer for young visitors. The action is part of a programme of environmental waste and recycling improvements in Kvasovo, which have seen it awarded Ecovillage of the Year.

Photographs of the plastic bottle 'dams' now removed from the Borzhava spread across the region: not only through media coverage but also as part of a record breaking Danube Day exhibition. The photographs caught the attention of an estimated 17,000 people in **Uzhgorod** and, at 144m-long, it was the **longest-ever environmental photography exhibition** in Ukraine. Displayed along the pedestrian bridge over the River Uzh, the 'Water Beauty of Transcarpathia' exhibition consisted of 173 stunning and dramatic images of the Tisza rivers, selected from entries from across Transcarpathia and abroad. Passers-by couldn't help but stop and gaze at the juxta-positioning of awe-inspiring and troubling images. Highlighting its location over the River Uzh, one organiser said it was as if the river itself was telling us about its splendours but also its woes.

Together we can do it; we can preserve what God has given us."
Victor Pogorelov, Mayor of Uzhgorod

All three events were organized by the Zakarpattia Oblast Organization of All-Ukrainian Ecological League with Coca-Cola Beverages Ukraine, the EU Delegation in Ukraine, Uzhgorod City and the Tisza River Basin Authority.

This year's Ukrainian **Danube Art Masters** are 14 year-old Diana Mytskan and 11-year-old Alla Lukan from Kobaky village in Kosiv rayon. They joined with 200 other children from Transcarpathia, Carpathian and Danube Delta regions at a Danube Day celebration. Their fabulous collage of a mermaid with its equally imposing title - Nature is waiting for repentance: otherwise, like Atlántida, everything stops existing – greatly impressed the judges. They go onto the international final in Budapest. Overall, 28 schools and clubs entered the annual 14-country art competition organised by the Black Sea Branch of the Ukrainian Environmental Academy of Sciences (Delta region) and Edelweiss ecological organisation (Carpathian region).

Danube Day Partners

Zakarpattia Oblast Organisation of the All-Ukrainian League; EU project: Complementary Support to the Ministry of Ecology & Natural Resources in the Sector of Budget Support Implementation; Coca-Cola Beverages Ukraine; Tisza River Basin Authority; local authorities, communities and organisations in Zakarpattia; The Western Centre of the Ukrainian Branch of the World Laboratory; Black Sea Branch of the Ukrainian Environmental Academy of Sciences; Edelweiss ecological organisation.

Danube Day 2013: Get active for the sturgeon!

For more about the 14-country Danube Day celebrations, view www.danubeday.org or email the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR): benedikt.mandl@unvienna.org.