

Danube Day 2013 in Austria

Austrians looked to the sky and the water on Danube Day 2013

Spectacle and laughter filled the air at Danube Day 2013, with a dramatic challenge to slack-line the width of the Danube in Vienna, accompanied on the beach by flying fish and a fabulous bubble show. In the water, children from across the country got active with their own 'Danube Challenge' digging mini-models of the Basin. Many events had a decidedly fishy aroma this year: sturgeon conservation was the key theme in 2013.

At Vienna's Strandbar Herrmann, the beach met the circus at **Vienna's Danube Day**, dedicated to the smallest sturgeon, the Sterlet. Children and politicians were equally thrilled by world champion slack-liner and twice Guinness Record Holder, Lukas Imler, as he performed a daredevil show over the Danube. He delighted the crowds as he achieved his challenge to walk across the 60m-wide channel. Everyone had a chance to have-a-go – over the sand rather than the river – with Lukas providing top tips.

"Danube Day is a tremendous achievement"

Environment Minister Niki Berlakovich.

Children loved the giant bubbles and air-fish that filled the sky and had the chance to observe living sturgeons and a newly-unveiled giant sculpture. Others pulled up a deckchair to watch street performers in the 'Dance of the Sterlet' and enjoy chilled-out music, delicious food and speeches by Doris Mures, Transport Minister; Ulli Sima, Vienna Environment Councilor and Reinhard Mang, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Environment. The day was organized by the Environment Ministry, City of Vienna and via donau, with support from the Transport Ministry.

"The Danube is our central water lifeline but also a sensitive ecosystem that requires careful handling ... so future generations can experience the irreplaceable natural treasure that is the Danube Basin."

Environment Minister Niki Berlakovich

1500 teenagers took their own **Danube Challenge** on June 20th. The 7th national youth river competition challenged students with crazy tests of skill and knowledge at the Donau-Auen National Park at **Stopfenreuth**. The annual event is organised by the Environment Ministry, with Donau-Auen National Park and Coca-Cola Hellenic. Pupils from 60 schools across Austria took part in 'DIY your own Danube', digging mini channels on the river shore, complete with wetlands, beaver-sculpted woodland, ships, bridges, dams and even cities, made from found natural materials.

Answering Danube quiz questions earned them valuable tools to aid their creations! Achieving the most facebook 'likes', pupils from HLW Steyr won first prize for their creation.

Entries were also submitted into the **Danube Art Master** contest organized by Umweltdachverband, part of a basin-wide initiative that encourages children to think about their rivers and create a piece of art from materials found near the banks. Class 3b from Marc Aurel Secondary in Tulln pushed HLW Steyr from the top-spot to claim the 2013 Danube Art Master crown.

Whilst young people created their own mini-environments in Stopfenreuth, the **Engelhartszell Mini-Danube Water Adventure exhibition** displayed interactive models of river sections, examining river life, dynamics and landscape. At the Danube Aquarium, Danube Day Austria was proud to become the official **Sterlet Sponsor!**

In an initiative of the Vienna-based IAD (International Association for Danube Research), 30 young researchers from the 14 Danube countries came together to promote international cooperation and knowledge exchange at **The Danube Camp in Dunasziget Ecopark**, NW Hungary. Landscape assessment, soil science and presentation skills were key topics, as well as training for Danube Soil Strategy Network Soil Ambassadors. Students also took time-off for outdoor cooking, swimming and canoeing!

Danube Day Partners

Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management; City of Vienna; via donau; Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology; Donau-Auen National Park; Coca-Cola Hellenic; Umweltdachverband, WienCont; IAD (International Association for Danube Research); Danube Aquarium, Engelhartszell and AQA (Aqua Quality Austria).

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.