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## PRESS INVITATION

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup>/Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010 – Launch of the ‘Caviar Road’ tour and release of endangered beluga sturgeon with satellite transmitters into the Danube**



Danube beluga sturgeon being reared for the Danube restocking programme. Source: Radu Suciu



Sturgeon fishermen's boats moored up on the Danube. Source: Carolyn Knight

Beluga sturgeon are the world's largest freshwater fish, growing up to 6 m long and 100 years old. This living dinosaur produces the most prized caviar in the world reaching prices of \$1000 for only 100g. The beluga is however endangered and in the Danube, its last remaining stronghold in Europe, it has declined to numbers only 10% of those 50 years ago.



**Shortnose sturgeon with satellite tag attached.**

**Source: Boyd Kynard**

The Danube river system has long been subjected to human influence from a number of sources altering the entire ecosystem. The Danube fish community, in particular the beluga sturgeon, has really been impacted by these changes. But attitudes are changing and in 2006 all sturgeon fishing was banned in Romania helping to protect the remaining individuals and encouraging people to find alternative uses of the great beluga.

However while this has been beneficial to the sturgeon populations in the Danube and their conservation, the sturgeon fishing

ban has had a negative impact upon the local communities, dependent for generations on fishing sturgeon. Best Combat, a project funded through the Norwegian Cooperation Programme with Bulgaria and Romania is helping to provide the skills and infrastructure necessary for local communities to develop a sustainable way of life based upon the protected beluga sturgeon through tourism.

Next week we will release the new tourism itinerary 'Caviar Road' which offers the opportunity to explore Romania and the Danube by following the route of the beluga's spawning migration along the Danube starting from the Black Sea stopping at cultural sites from community and sturgeon heritage en route. We will mark the launch of this exciting new travel experience with a two day event. On Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May we will tag four 2+ metre-long beluga sturgeon with satellite transmitters and release them into the Danube. On Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May you are invited to join us at the Sfântu Gheorghe sturgeon fishermen's festival for the official launch of Caviar Road.



**Romanian media cover beluga sturgeon release in 2009. Source: Carolyn Knight**



**Sturgeon scientist Carolyn Knight with a beluga sturgeon. Source: Liliana Taflan**