

Paradise Lost - Daniel Solander's legacy

His Excellency Ambassador Pär Ahlberger

The Swedish naturalist Daniel Solander was one of the foremost botanists on board the Endeavour during its voyage in 1768 - 1771. He represents the first encounter between the Nordic Region and the Pacific Region based on botany, linguistics, culture and astronomy. The Polynesian scholar Tupaia and Solander formed an important bond during the Endeavour voyage. It was the first exchange between the Swedish culture and the Polynesian, Maori and Aboriginal cultures. It is a partly forgotten story which needs to be told again.

Daniel Solander was born in 1733, in a town only 100 km from the Arctic Circle. He was described as short and stout. His eyes were small, his face jovial with a fair complexion. He

was a careless dresser and liked bright waistcoats. He was a person well liked, combining humility, charm, absent-mindedness and social skills. He studied medicine and natural history in Uppsala as the favourite student of Carl Linnaeus, the founder of modern systematic biology. In 1760, at the invitation of British naturalists, Solander travelled to London to give instructions in the Linnean methods. He never returned to Sweden, much to the disappointment of Linnaeus.

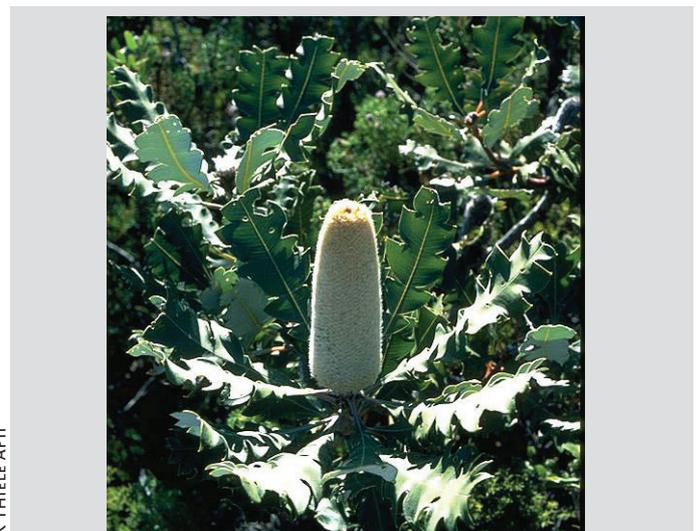
In 1763 Solander was appointed assistant keeper at the British Museum. He formed a strong friendship with Joseph Banks and joined the scientific staff on the Endeavour expedition. This deciding moment was later described by Banks in a letter to a friend in Sweden.

Of this (the Endeavour voyage) I promptly informed Doctor Solander, who received the news with much pleasure and immediately promised to provide me with complete information on all aspects of natural history which could probably be met with during such an extensive and unprecedented voyage. But some days afterwards, when we were together at Lady Monson's table and spoke about the unique opportunities I should get, Solander got remarkably fired, sprang up a short time later from his chair and asked with intent eyes: Would you like to have a travelling companion? I replied: Such a person as you would be of infinite advantage and pleasure to me! If so, he said, I want to go with you, and from that moment everything was settled and decided.

During the voyage Solander and Banks collected around 17,000 plant specimens. The specimens from Australia included around 900 species and in New Zealand 349 species. Solander was the author of the first individual floras of Australia and New Zealand. These were major but unpublished botanical works. His pioneering descriptions have



The Simpling Macaroni, 13 July 1772 / M. Darly Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales / PXA 1353 Macaroni, a satirical etching portraying Daniel Solander, holding a plant specimen with flowers and root in his right hand, and a curved knife (lettered *Savigny*) in his left.



KTHIELE APII

Banksia solandri, Stirling Range *Banksia*. The species name commemorates Daniel Solander. It was first gathered in 1829 in the Stirling Range WA by William Baxter. (*The Banksia Book*, AS George, p 80)

been described as scientifically comprehensible, yet elegant and poetic. He also recorded important ethno-botanical information, including many Maori names. The Polynesian navigator and interpreter, Tupaia played a crucial role in this.

In a letter to Sweden, Banks later described the intensive work on board the Endeavour.

During this voyage, which lasted three years, I can say of him (Solander) that he combined an incomparable diligence and an acumen that left nothing unsettled, with an unbelievable equanimity. During all that time we did not once have any altercation which for a moment became heated... We had a reasonably good supply of books with us for Indian natural history and seldom was a gale so strong that it interrupted our usual time of study, which lasted from approximately 8 o'clock in the morning until 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and from 4 or 5 o'clock, when the smell of cooking had vanished, we sat together until it got dark at a big table in the cabin with our draughtsman directly opposite us and showed him the manner in which the drawing should be done and also hastily made descriptions of all the natural history subjects while they were still fresh.

Solander and Banks used large quantities of John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* to press the specimens during the voyage.

After returning to London, Solander resumed his post at the British Museum. He continued to work with Banks and they made several smaller expeditions, among them to the Isle of Wight, Scotland and Iceland. The plan was to document the botanical results of the Endeavour expedition. However, Solander passed away following a stroke in 1782, which left Banks devastated. In 1784 he wrote to a friend in Sweden: *The botanical work, with which I am now occupied, is drawing near to an end. Solander's name will appear on the title page beside mine, since everything was written through our combined labour. While he was alive, hardly a single sentence was written while we*

were not together. This was not to happen.

The Embassy of Sweden and the Solander Gallery in Wellington, NZ, have launched a unique art collaboration: *Paradise Lost - Daniel Solander's Legacy*. Ten artists have been invited to respond creatively to the legacy of Daniel Solander, with works including painting, watercolours, limited edition prints,

artist books and three-dimensional objects. The research by Dr Edward Duyker has been important in this project. I would like to recommend his book: *Nature's Argonaut: Daniel Solander 1733-1782*.

The artists involved in the project are Sharnae Beardsley from Christchurch, Dagmar Dyck from Auckland, Tabatha Forbes from New Plymouth, John McClean from New Plymouth, Alexis Neal from Auckland, Jo Ogier from Christchurch, Jenna Packer from Dunedin, John Pusateri from Auckland, Lynn Taylor from Dunedin and Michel Tuffery from Wellington.

The exhibition will be officially opened at the Solander Gallery in Wellington in February 2019 and will tour New Zealand until mid-2020. It will visit Australia and I hope that it will be first opened at the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) in Canberra. Our good friends at ANBG gave us invaluable support when we created a Solander Garden at the Embassy in Canberra, which was officially opened last year. I am looking forward to hosting the Friends of ANBG at the Embassy in 2019.

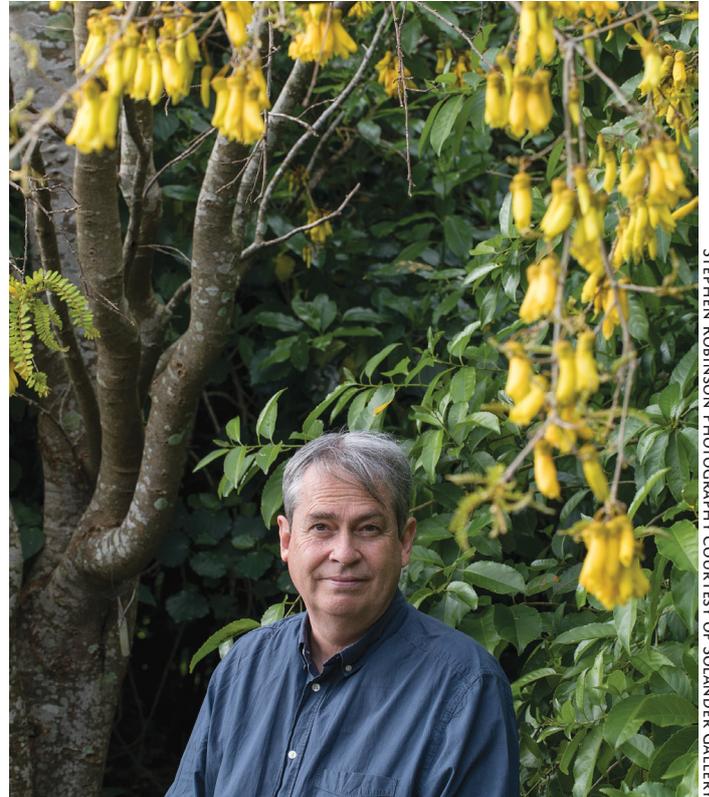
We are also looking forward to collaborating with the Florilegium Society in Sydney on a watercolour art exhibition of plants collected by Solander and Banks, planned for 2020.



(1733 - 1782)

PARADISE LOST

DANIEL SOLANDER'S LEGACY



STEPHEN ROBINSON PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF SOLANDER GALLERY

Swedish Ambassador to Australia, Pär Ahlberger, in the Auckland Botanic Gardens under a *Sophora microphylla*, coined by Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander. The common name of this tree is Kowhai, family Fabaceae, native to New Zealand and widely regarded as the NZ national flower.