

PARADISE LOST - Daniel Solander's Legacy

For the past few years the Embassy of Sweden has been engaged more than ever before in the Pacific Region. I am personally committed to the region, with its opportunities and challenges related to climate, environment and the oceans. Sweden and the vast Pacific Region might be geographical far apart, but the connections are strong.

I have travelled in the footsteps of the Swedish naturalist Daniel Solander in Australia, New Zealand and the wider Pacific Region. Solander was the foremost botanist onboard the Endeavour during its voyage in 1768 - 1771. He represents the first encounter between the Nordic Region and the Pacific Region based on botany, linguistic, culture and astronomy. The Polynesian scholar Tupaia played an important role for Solander and for the Endeavour voyage. Together the two scholars formed a strong bond. 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. As an adult 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



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biology. During this period Solander undertook two plant collecting expeditions to Swedish Lapland. 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 at 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."

The Endeavour left the port of Plymouth in August 1768 and in October 1769 it reached New Zealand. Solander undertook botanical excursions at Poverty Bay (Turanganui-a-kiwa), Anaura Bay, Tolaga Bay (Uawa), bay of Plenty (Te Moana-a-Toi), Mercury Bay (Te-Whanganui-o-hei), Hauraki-Thames, Bay of Islands, Queen Charlotte Sound (Totaranui) and Admiralty Bay. The Endeavour reached the east coast of Australia and entered Kamay Botany Bay in April 1770. Solander made further botanical excursions at Bustard Bay, Thirsty Sound, Palm Island (Bwgcorman), Cape Grafton (Yagalijda), Endeavour River (Wabalumbal), Lookout Point, Lizard Island, Possession Island (Bedanug) and Booby Island (Ngiangu). The two major plant collection sites were at what is now Botany Bay Kamay National Park south of Sydney and at the Endeavour River near Cooktown, where the voyagers halted for seven weeks to make repairs of their ship.

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

In a letter to Sweden, Banks later described the intensive work onboard 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 in 1771. 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 in 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 planned documentation was never published. It took almost 250 years before the *Joseph Banks' Florilegium: Botanical Treasures from Cook's First Voyage* was published in 2017.

I have met with local and indigenous communities, botanic gardens, artists and government institutions in Australia and New Zealand to initiate a dialogue on the legacy of Solander. He is still remembered.

The Solander Garden at the Royal Botanic Garden in Sydney was dedicated by His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf in 1982. The Solander monument, located not far from Cape Solander in Kurnell, Kamay Botany Bay National Park, was inaugurated in 1914. The Daniel Solander Library at the Royal Botanic Garden in Sydney is the oldest botanical research library in Australia. In Cooktown Botanic Garden there is an impressive Solander Garden. I am proud to have personally initiated the project of a Solander Garden at the Embassy in Sweden in Canberra with native plants. We received invaluable support from the National Botanic Garden in Canberra and Dr Edward Duyker, who has done impressive research on Solander. In New Zealand there are volcanic islets named after Solander. He is also remembered for his development of a dust- and lightproof collection box referred to as a "Solander Box", which is still in use by art galleries and museums around the world.

The Embassy of Sweden and the Solander Gallery in Wellington have launched a unique art collaboration, *Paradise Lost: Daniel Solander's Legacy*. It all began by an unannounced visit by me to the gallery in Wellington late in 2017. I was deeply impressed by the gallery. In June 2018 I had the privilege to attend the launch of the art project together with the artists in New Zealand that had been invited to respond creatively to the legacy of Daniel Solander. It was a rewarding event in which we discussed Solander, the meetings with the Polynesians and with the Maori as well as the cultural, botanical and scientific aspects of this first encounter. The linguistic aspects were also important. Solander learned some Polynesian and later a maori word was imported to the Swedish language, which would be unique.

I am deeply impressed by the artists and very grateful for their preparedness to engage in the project. The artists involved 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 in Wellington in early 2019 and we plan for it to tour New Zealand, Australia and hopefully Sweden. Such a joint collaboration has never been done before between our three nations, who have enjoyed very warm and friendly relations for a long time. It is my hope that the exhibition will give a new perspective on the encounters during the voyage by the Endeavour in the Pacific Region and to inspire a dialogue on botany, sustainability, resilience and contacts between cultures in this beautiful but fragile part of the world.

Pär Ahlberger
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Embassy of Sweden