



by Beaglehole that, curiously amongst the numerous paintings of New Zealand and Australian plants made by Banks's men on that first expedition, there is only one sketch of a land bird, and that was a Banksian cockatoo made at the Endeavour River in Queensland.

Beaglehole suggested that there was good evidence that a complete folio of bird drawings and paintings made on Cook's first voyage was misplaced. As both of Banks's artists, Parkinson and Spöring, tragically died within two days of each other on the journey home, this is quite feasible.

Dr Beaglehole (whose biological footnotes are quite meticulous) is quite right to point out that there is not a kite-like bird with an enormous tail known in New Zealand natural history. The European kite of course is a member of the falcon family with long wings and forked tail. The nearest thing to an enormous kite would be the Haast's eagle *Harpogornis moorei* which is assumed to have been extinct by this time. But the eagle's tail was not 'enormous'.

Spöring's bird remains a mystery. Probably, because the report is so bizarre and inexplicable, the episode has been largely ignored by natural historians.

The French 'discovered' saddlebacks, tui and the pohutukawa in the Far North.

By an extraordinary coincidence the French ship *St Jean Baptiste* commanded by Jean-François-Marie Surville also arrived off the Northland coast late in December 1769, departing in January of 1770.

Though *Endeavour* and *St Jean Baptiste* were not far from each other at times, very little attention has been given to the Surville expedition, probably because of our staunchly Anglocentric culture. The volume of written material which has survived from this expedition is a lot less than that of Cook's and the rather terse log entries are more typical of what one would expect from sailors — though still fascinating reading nonetheless.

Like Cook, Surville and his men quickly worked out that apart from a few lizards the only quadrupeds present in New Zealand were dogs and rats. Like Cook, the French were also moved to comment on the abundance of birds. They described some of the more common species. One 'like a black bird with two little red wattles like a hen' (the saddleback), and another 'black bird' 'with the same shape and size except instead of a wattle there is a little tuft of white feathers' (the tui). They also noted in January 1770 'large...

Rangaunu Bay on the Karekare Peninsula, visited by the French explorer Surville aboard the St Jean Baptiste in 1769-70. Shipboard logs record the saddleback, tui, and pohutukawa. The expedition gifted to Maori, pairs of fowls and pigs, but abducted a young chief who died at sea.

hard-wooded... trees right on the coast covered in bunches of red flowers' — which could only be the pohutukawa.

Surville departed donating to the local Maori a breeding pair of pigs, the ship's last rooster and hen (with advice in sign language to allow them to breed) and seeds of peas and rice.

Captain Cook — patron of bush walkers

Leaving the sensational Spöring incident aside, perhaps the most important nature observation of Cook's expedition is a more mundane one from Cook himself, who made a walk inland from Tolaga Bay soon after arriving in New Zealand.

Tramping through the bush and observing nature has become a popular recreational pursuit for modern day New Zealanders — especially Forest and Birders. It is interesting