

their array of special plants. Small wetlands were also treats to explore, displaying their collection of distinctive plants such as *Drosera arcturi*, *Oreobolus impar* and *Carpha alpina*.

Back at base, we enjoyed one immense pot-luck dinner which stretched into another the following night, much of it appearing in lunch boxes too. A mixture of salads, meats, curries, falafels, rice and pies were finished off with a fruit salad and hand-whipped cream. Saturday night we were engaged in plant ID tasks and photo viewing on handy laptops, which really do justice for plant recognition. Sunday night we were treated to a visit from DoC manager, Chris Stewart, who talked about conservation and issues in the Arthur's Pass National Park and beyond, and unflappably answered all our diverse questions. Chris gallantly helped us to finish the fruit salad laced with ice cream, custard, meringues and lamingtons!

SATURDAY 4 FEBRUARY – TEMPLE BASIN

Zuni Steer

After an excruciating climb up the bouldery zig-zag track, we finally reached Temple Basin at ca.1500 m a.s.l., which was full of botanical delights. The common pale-sheathed, keeled blades of the mid-ribbed snow tussock (*Chionochloa pallens*) and the curly snow tussock (*C. crassiuscula*) appeared in the basin. Copious quantities of *Celmisia* spp. kept us busy, including the purple-ribbed *C. verbascifolia*, the orangey-yellow and green striped *C. armstrongii*, the ubiquitous grey-green *C. discolor*, the large fading flowers of *C. semicordata*, one *C. angustifolia* and a scattering of hybrids, among the usual suspects, *C. gracilentia*, *C. spectabilis*, *C. alpina*, *C. laricifolia* and *C. sessiliflora*. *Dolichoglottis* flowers had long gone but the iconic large-leaved *Ranunculus lyallii* still displayed a few flower heads for the mandatory photograph. One unusual plant that begged attention was the yellow-flowered *Euphrasia cockayneana*, which was surprisingly easy to spot amongst the fawn and green grassy backdrop, especially as it was on display all the way up the track. The large glaucous mountain carrot (*Anisotome pilifera*) was another plant that stood out. Alas, we never found one in flower.

Temple Basin is very craggy with rocky bluffs, deeply cut streams and mini-waterfalls, creating a wonderful variety of landforms that provide a range of habitats for botanical diversity. In the boggy areas, where it was compulsory to lie down and feel the moisture up close, we strained to balance a hand lens above the tiny plants. Among the usual flowering *Donatia novae-zelandiae* and *Phyllachne colensoi* cushions, we discovered red round patches of the insect-trapping *Drosera spatulata* (also see page 57) and the tiny sharp tufts of *Colobanthus strictus*.