



The lone *Chionochloa spiralis* remaining in front of the Luxmore Caves in Fiordland. Photo: Lloyd Homer, Geological Survey

grasslands. *Chionochloa spiralis* is perhaps the most palatable, and today plants are rarely found within reach of deer. On accessible sites deer have eliminated tussocks leaving old dead bases with occasional shoots beyond their reach. While limestone bluffs offer potential refugia, it is clear that the full range of *Chionochloa spiralis* has been significantly reduced by grazing animals. On Mount Luxmore, a lone, precariously perched plant of *Chionochloa spiralis* was found above treeline on the banks of a small stream cut into the limestone, a remnant of a former community decimated by deer.

Hunting pressure on deer in the Special Takahe Area is helping to preserve *Chi-*

*onochloa spiralis* in the Murchison Mountains. The Department of Conservation is also growing the tussock at a nursery near Te Anau. One possibility is that these plants might be re-established with the solitary plant at the entrance to the Luxmore Caves to focus public attention on our most threatened tussock species. 🦋

Bill Lee is a botanist with DSIR Botany Division, Dunedin. Roger Lavers is a former wildlife officer with the Wildlife Service who has worked for many years on takahe preservation.

