

# Glossary

**afrothere** An animal classified as belonging to the super order Afrotheria, a very ancient group of mammals from which the other mammal groups split. Afrotheres include aardvarks, hyraxes, golden moles, elephants and manatees.

**annual** A plant that completes its life cycle (from seed germination through reproduction to death) in less than a year.

**biodiversity** The diversity of different kinds of living organisms and the processes that sustain them. This is a modern term, short for biological diversity, and includes all living things: plants, animals, birds, insects and micro-organisms.

**biome** A broad-scale grouping of areas of similar climate and vegetation. In southern Africa there are eight biomes: forest, fynbos, succulent karoo, Nama-karoo, savanna, grassland, thicket and desert.

**canopy** The leafy portion of a shrub or tree.

**Cape Floral Kingdom** The smallest, and one of the richest, of six major plant kingdoms into which the world was divided, based on their number of endemic plant families, genera and species. The concept is considered outdated by modern botanists, but it still holds charm among plant enthusiasts.

**Cape Fold Mountains** The parallel mountain ranges of south-western South Africa (including the south-western parts of Eden) formed by the compression and bending of rocks that were deposited there. Today the mountains are composed mainly of erosion-resistant quartzites.

**carbon sequestration** The storage of carbon in plant material or within the soil. The term is widely used in the global carbon market.

**catchment** The area from which a river collects surface run-off.

**CEPF** Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, a joint initiative of Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank, and whose fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

**chelonian** Referring to tortoises and turtles.

**cladogenesis** The production of new species via the subdivision of an ancestral species.

**dagga** The Afrikaans word, adapted from the Khoekhoe *dacha*, for *Cannabis sativa*, marijuana or Indian hemp plant.

**ecosystem** The system of relationships and interactions between living organisms, such as plants and animals, and the non-living environment, such as soil, water and air. Ecosystems occur at different scales, from very small (such as a pond) to whole landscapes (such as an entire water catchment area).

**endemic** Referring to an organism living in a prescribed area and found nowhere else.

**ericoid** Referring to small to medium shrubs with very fine leaves, often with rolled-under edges, as in members of the family Ericaceae. Ericoids form one of the characteristic elements of fynbos vegetation. See *also* proteoid, restioid.

**flora** The collective list of plant species that occur in a specified area.

**fynbos** The shrubland vegetation, characterised by ericoids, proteoids and restioids, that dominates in the area between Port Elizabeth and Cape Town and

northwards to Clanwilliam. This area under fynbos is included in the Cape Floral Kingdom.

**gannaveld** A type of succulent karoo vegetation found in generally salt-rich soils and low-lying areas, in which saltbushes are common.

**GEF** Global Environment Facility, which was formed after the Rio Earth Summit of 1991 and helps developing countries by funding projects that protect the global environment.

**Great Escarpment** In the context of southern Africa, this is the massive scarp or wall that eroded back from the coast after Africa became separated from the other Gondwanan continents. It separates the lower coastal plain from the higher interior one.

**growth form** The term used to describe categories of plants that are broadly similar in their appearance and function, such as trees, shrubs, grasses or bulbs.

**habitat** The living space of an organism or a community of organisms, characterised by its physical or biological properties. Examples are a wetland habitat or a forest habitat. See *also* vegetation type, veld type.

**hysteranthly** The condition in some bulb-like plants whereby the flowers appear at a different time from the leaves. See *also* synanthy.

**interfluvium** The elevated area that separates two adjacent river valleys.

**land reform** A national programme to change the way in which land is owned and distributed in a democratic South Africa. It comprises three sectors: Land Tenure Reform, Land Resettlement and Land Restitution. Land Tenure Reform deals with upgrading insecure tenure rights, especially those of farmworkers, illegal occupiers and people living in communal areas. Land Resettlement is responsible for assisting the landless to obtain land – owned privately or by the state – for settlement purposes. Land Restitution entails the restitution of land rights for people who were dispossessed of their land.

**mesemb** A member of the plant family formerly known as Mesembryanthemaceae (now Aizoaceae), meaning 'middy flower'. See *also* vygie.

**mesic** Moist.

**monospecific** Referring to a plant or animal group (a family or genus) which has only one species.

**mosaic (thicket)** A form of thicket that is scattered in clumps over an area covered by another vegetation type such as fynbos, grassland, savanna, karoo or forest. See *also* solid (thicket).

**opslag** An Afrikaans word meaning 'weedy'. It refers to pioneer or colonising plants, which are predominantly annuals.

**paleoendemic** An endemic that evolved in the distant past and has few or no close relatives.

**proteoid** Referring to shrubs with broadish leathery and evergreen leaves, as in members of the family Proteaceae. They form one of the characteristic elements of fynbos vegetation. See *also* ericoid, restioid.

**pterosaur** A winged reptile that lived from the late Triassic to the end of the Cretaceous.

**radiation** The process by which new species evolve in different habitats. See *also* speciation.

**renosterveld** The vernacular name for the shrubland that superficially resembles fynbos but grows on

more fertile, fine-textured and clay-rich soils, mostly within the Cape Floral Kingdom. It differs from fynbos in lacking restioids, while proteoids are rare.

**restioid** Referring to grass- or reed-like plants that belong to the families Restionaceae and Cyperaceae. They form one of the characteristic elements of fynbos vegetation. See *also* ericoid, proteoid.

**SANBI** South African National Biodiversity Institute.

**seed bank** The accumulated store of viable seeds, which remains on the plant in an old flowerhead or lies buried in the soil.

**senile** In geological terms, refers to a landscape that has undergone very little rejuvenation (by means of uplift or volcanism, for example). As a result, its scenery is very subdued and its soils are highly weathered and leached of nutrients.

**siNtu** The family of African languages spoken in Central and southern Africa.

**solid (thicket)** A form of thicket in which the plants are dense and the vegetation is continuous.

**sourveld** A form of grassland that grows where there is relatively high rainfall. It is palatable to grazing animals only during the growing season. See *also* sweetveld.

**speciation** The process by which new species evolve. See *also* radiation.

**sweetveld** A form of grassland that grows where there is relatively low rainfall or in fertile soils. The component grasses retain their nutritional value and are palatable to grazing animals throughout the year. See *also* sourveld.

**synanthy** The condition of most bulb-like plants whereby the flowers appear at the same time as the leaves. See *also* hysteranthly.

**therapsid** A member of the diverse group of mammal-like reptiles from which mammals evolved.

**trekboer** The Afrikaans word describing the nomadic graziers of European descent who drove their livestock from one location to another.

**vegetation type** A broad classification of vegetation based mainly on the predominance of certain growth forms in it (and thus its appearance) and functional characteristics (for example, a shrubland, woodland or a grassland). See *also* habitat, veld type.

**veld type** A classification of vegetation based mainly on the predominance of certain growth forms in it (and thus its appearance) and its functional characteristics, but at usually a more detailed scale than a vegetation type (for example, a proteoid shrubland). See *also* habitat, vegetation type.

**veldkos** The Afrikaans word for edible plant material collected in the wild.

**vygie** The Afrikaans word for a small fig, which has become a colloquial term for a member of the plant family formerly known as Mesembryanthemaceae. It probably originally described the fleshy, fig-like fruits of *Carpobrotus*, the first specimen of this family to be collected and the only genus that bears such fruits. See *also* mesemb.

**Xhosaland** The territory occupied by the ama-Xhosa at the time of their pre-colonial independence, loosely bound by the Mbashe River in the north, the Sundays River in the south, the Great Escarpment in the west and the Indian Ocean in the east.

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