

## **Glossary**

### **Eco-region**

Large unit of land or water containing a geographically distinct assemblage of species, natural communities, and environmental conditions.

### **Ecosystem process**

An intrinsic ecosystem characteristic whereby an ecosystem maintains its integrity. Ecosystem processes include decomposition, production, nutrient cycling, and fluxes of nutrients and energy.

### **Species richness**

The number of species within a given sample, community, or area.

### **Subspecies**

A 'race' of a species which interbreed and are genetically distinct from other groups within the same species. They are allocated a third Latin name, after the two from their parent species (e.g. *Leontopodiumnivale subsp. alpinum*). There are currently no systematic criteria for identifying subspecies except that they must be geographically distinct populations and, in some way, different from other populations of the parent species.

### **Estuary**

Area of the mouth of a river where it broadens into the sea, and where fresh and seawater intermingle to produce brackish water. The estuarine environment is very rich in wildlife, particularly aquatic, but it is very vulnerable to damage as a result of human activities.