

Indicator species: a species that responds rapidly or to low level changes in the environment, and so can be used to indicate environmental changes. Sea grasses are used as an indicator of clean water because they require sunlight to penetrate water. When sediment or algae block the sunlight, the grasses die quickly. Frogs are another indicator of clean water. Because from the egg through maturity they are in contact with water, and because they are more sensitive to some pollutants than other species, they will die or become ill and deformed at relatively low levels of water pollution. The canary is a classic indicator species. In the days before air testing equipment, odorless and colorless poison gas built up in coal mines. Miners would bring a canary into the mine with them. Because the canary was more sensitive to these gasses than the miners, they knew that as long as the canary was singing, the air was safe.