

'Cyclone science' shows rainforest impacts and recovery

March 20 2007



Thirty per cent of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area was impacted by Cyclone Larry.

A year on from Cyclone Larry research into the environmental impacts of the category 4/5 storm is starting to deliver interesting results. This suite of projects involving 25 scientists from 5 institutions was set up shortly after the cyclone hit to investigate its effects on the rainforests of the Wet Tropics.

“This is probably the most comprehensive study of the environmental impacts of a tropical cyclone ever done anywhere in the world,” said the Director of the CSIRO/JCU Tropical Landscapes Joint Venture, Professor Steve Turton.

Scientists have calculated that around 30% of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area was impacted to some extent by Cyclone Larry.

“Fragments of remnant rainforest in otherwise cleared areas appear to have been the hardest hit,” he said.

“Cyclones are a natural process that tropical rainforest plants and animals have learned to live with, but human impacts like forest fragmentation and the introduction of exotic weeds and fire can make the recovery process much harder.”

“In some cases, the rainforests just won’t recover without our help.”

“For example, there is a real risk that without quick action serious weeds like Miconia could spread rapidly in damaged forest areas, and smother the growth of native understorey plants.”

“The prospect of cyclones becoming more severe due to climate change makes it important to understand what actions we can take to make remnant rainforests more resistant to cyclonic events, and help them to recover,” Professor Turton concluded.

James Cook University and CSIRO have announced plans to host a ‘Cyclone Science Seminar’ in Cairns later this year.

Source: CSIRO

Citation: 'Cyclone science' shows rainforest impacts and recovery (2007, March 20) retrieved 28 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2007-03-cyclone-science-rainforest-impacts-recovery.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--