Life Along the Tully River - It rains a lot

Climate:
Tully, located at latitude18.2° S and longitude142° E, experiences a tropical seasonal climate, with a pleasantly mild winter (May-August), hot summer (October-December) and a marked wet season (January-March). Storms may occur in the hotter months and tropical cyclones with associated flooding may occasionally be experienced in the wet season.

Temperatures range from an average minimum of about 18°C to an average maximum of about 32°C, however temperatures can rise as to high as 40°C on hot summer days, and even fall low on occasional winter nights to a point where frost is experienced.

Rainfall:
The average annual rainfall recorded at the Tully sugar mill is over 4000mm. Higher falls are experienced but unrecorded on the surrounding mountains. This is among the highest average in the state.
Tully holds the record for the highest daily rainfall: 1140 mm (45 inches).

Floods:
The Tully River catchment covers an area of 1475 sq km at Euramo. The Tully River is a relatively short stream, rising in the high rainfall areas of the coastal ranges. Floods inundate cane lands and the larger floods isolate farmhouses. Floods can also cut the Bruce Highway at Euramo. Inundation of the highway at Euramo occurs less frequently since the new bridges and raised highway sections were constructed.

Tully River approaches at Euramo: floodwaters receding, April 2000

Bellenden Plains in flood (c.1930s)

The Bureau of Meteorology now operates a flood warning system for the Tully River based on rainfall and river height observations. The network consists of a number of volunteer rainfall and river height observers who forward observations when the initial flood height has been exceeded at their station, as well as automatic telemetry stations.

Cyclones:

Cyclones may be experienced from November to March, bringing torrential rain, high winds and associated floods and storm damage.

In the past, the 1918 cyclone was particularly devastating. It destroyed the Queensland Government Aboriginal Settlement at Hull River (South Mission Beach).

Photo (left) shows the polling station at Bingil Bay after the cyclone in 1918.

Cyclone Agnes of 1956 damaged buildings in the district including the saw mill at El Arish (below).

Left: a Kennedy valley banana plantation after a cyclone on Christmas Eve, 1971.

Cyclone Winifred caused extensive damage to crops and buildings in the district in 1986.

Right: St Clare's Church.

Cyclone Winifred crossed the coast near Cowley Beach at about 6.45pm, 1st February 1986. The severe tropical cyclone had a central pressure 958hPa, with winds up to 200km/hr and gusts up to 220 km/hr. Three people died and crops were devastated in the Cardwell Shire. An estimated $100 million of damage was done and about 600 workers lost their jobs.

►*up to 1400 homes sustained slight to serious damage, a further 300 more suffered severe to total destruction.*
►*total elimination of the district's banana and paw paw crops, thousands of hectares of sugar cane damaged, flooded or broken*
►*almost every tree in the district stripped of its leaves; many trees uprooted and felled*
►*garden sheds and aluminium boats lifted and blown away*
►*roofing iron lifted, windows cracked and smashed; whole houses collapsed, roofs lifted off*
►*lethal flying debris*
►*power lines down, power poles snapped, no electricity*
►*people had to share generators, barbecues, etc*
►*cleaning up took days. Some areas were without power for a week*

Recent Cyclones

More recently, Cyclone Larry (2006) and Cyclone Yasi (2011) in turn devastated the region.

Severe Tropical **Cyclone *Larry*** crossed the tropical north Queensland coast near Innisfail during the morning of Monday 20 March 2006. No lives were lost and no serious injuries were reported but damage to infrastructure and crops was extensive. The total estimated loss was over half a billion dollars.

About 10 000 houses were damaged. Flooding disrupted road and rail access for several days.

Severe Tropical **Cyclone *Yasi*** began developing as a tropical low northwest of Fiji on 29th January and started tracking on a general westward track. As it intensified it was named Yasi at 10pm on the 30th by Fiji Meteorological Service.

Yasi intensified further and was upgraded to a Category 5 system. *Yasi* maintained this intensity and its west-southwest movement and made landfall near Mission Beach between midnight and 1am early on Thursday 3rd February. It was a strong and large system, with a strong core that brought damaging winds and heavy rain as it tracked westwards across northern Queensland.

Yasi is one of the most powerful cyclones to have affected Queensland since records commenced. The barograph at the Tully Sugar Mill recorded a minimum pressure of 929 hPa as the eye passed over which indicated that wind gusts of about 285 km/h were experienced.

Tully and Cardwell suffered major damage to structures and vegetation . The eye of the cyclone passed over Dunk Island and Tully around midnight on 2nd February. The largest rainfall totals were in the order of 200-300mm in the 24 hours to 9am Thursday. The highest totals were; South Mission Beach 471mm, Bulgun Creek 373mm and extensive flooding ensued.