



Cyclone Kerry

The colour picture above shows Cyclone Kerry on February 18, 1979, and was compiled from infra-red radiation reaching the satellite. Each colour represents a temperature range, from black (more than 14°C) through reds, dark green, brown, yellows, light green, and blues, to white (below -72°C).

The coldest cloud tops appear as a white region to the west of the eye of the cyclone, and the blue spiral arms represent bands of air being drawn into the storm's centre.

Kerry developed in the second week of February and reached hurricane strength on the 15th as it crossed the Solomon Islands, where it caused loss of life and widespread destruction.

Following an erratic path, the cyclone threatened the Queensland coast for 3 weeks, grazing the mainland near Bowen on March 1 and bringing floods, violent winds, and high seas that cost the communities between Cairns and Gladstone millions of dollars.

From the analysis of successive satellite images, meteorologists can calculate the flows of air into and out of a cyclone, and in particular the asymmetries of rotation that play an important part in the cyclone's development and behaviour. By studying many cyclones, scientists hope to learn how better to predict their movements.