## Project Update: August 2012

Thirty-nine macro-invertebrate surveys have been completed. For logistical reasons and because Belize's dry season was quite wet this year, we were unable to collect sufficient samples to undertake a useful biological classification. Consequently, the project was adapted early in the season to explore macro-invertebrate response to anthropogenic disturbance. Controlling for natural variation, samples were collected at forested sites and sites subject to a range of agricultural and residential activities. Samples have been fully processed and data are being analysed. One element of analysis includes the use of biological indices that are commonly used in temperate streams and have been regionally adapted, but untested in Belize. These indices were introduced to the Freshwater Ranger team and to students of the University of Belize Natural Resource Management Programme during their annual Field Methods course. A 6-day taxonomy workshop provided to the freshwater team has equipped them with the knowledge to identify macro-invertebrates to family resolution which they have been using to process samples for their own project.

Findings from research supported by the first Rufford grant were well received by delegates of the 1<sup>st</sup> Congreso Latinoamericano sobre Macroinvertebrados de Agua Dulce', Universidad de Costa Rica in February 2012 and the 6<sup>th</sup> Natural Research Management Symposium at the University of Belize in March 2012.



Left: Banana plantations are located alongside streams in the north of the study area. Right: Forest is burned before subsistence crops (usually corn and beans) are grown in 'milpas' throughout the study area.