



**Hugh Hales Points to Aerator in his Catfish Pond**

### **Tyler County Forest Landowners Learn about Ponds**

Hugh Hales, Director of Tyler County Forest Landowners Association, maintains a catfish pond on his tree farm east of Woodville. The 96-acre farm is part of a track originally homesteaded in the 1800's by his grandfather Raz Tucker. Hugh had the pond dug over a spring that his father had used decades earlier in his sugar cane syrup mill. Hugh designed and built the aerator and handles overflow with a siphon that pipes water from the bottom of the pond when the water level gets too high. The pond is frequented by ducks and herons and occasionally visited by otters.

Shannon Chambers, Tyler County Extension Agent, told the Tyler County Forest Landowners at their March 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, "Aerating a pond increases the oxygen level of the water and helps keep fish alive. This can be very beneficial during the summer months when the water level is low." Both Shannon and Billy Tolar of Tolar's Feed in Woodville emphasized the importance of having a core sample of the soil evaluated prior to digging a pond. Core sampling is a service provided by the National Resource Soil Conservation office in Woodville. The most frequent Tyler County pond problem is vegetation which can be controlled by chemicals or vegetation-eating fish.

Another program topic for the meeting was the status of black bears in Tyler County. Gary Calkins, District Leader of Texas Parks and Wildlife in Jasper, reported that the Louisiana Black Bear sub-species of Black Bears is historically native to East Texas. Gary stated emphatically, "Texas Parks and Wildlife is NOT releasing bears into Texas." Having been cleared from the area by the 1940's, Louisiana Black Bears are naturally migrating back into East Texas from Louisiana and Arkansas. Bears are protected in Texas; hence, hunters should be careful to not shoot a black bear, thinking it is a feral hog.