

Nature house restored

Forest & Bird's Hansel and Gretel house on South Auckland's eight-hectare Olive Davis Reserve is having a \$200,000 makeover. The 1920s Chapman-Taylor-designed house is the size of a wren's nest – 680 square feet – and once belonged to eccentric horse lover Olive Davis, who bequeathed the house to Forest & Bird in 1979. The house has never had power or a telephone.

"The famous arts and crafts architect Chapman-Taylor was a good friend of hers, so she commissioned the building off him. He really specialised in site-specific pieces that worked in harmony with nature," Forest & Bird North Island Field Officer Nick Beveridge says.

South Auckland Forest & Bird branch members have worked to give the house a proper storybook setting: a forest of puriri, totara and nikau palms. After the foundation and restoration work on the house is completed after Christmas, members will look at ways in which the house can be used.

"There have been a number of ideas that have been tossed around. It could become an education centre, or a place to propagate ferns. It's a special house, so we need to find a role for it that really fits with its unique aesthetic and history," Beveridge says.



Olive Davis House in South Auckland is being restored and could be used as a nature base.

Funding for the renovation came from Manukau City Council, Perry Foundation, Lotteries Environment and Heritage, Stout Trust and the Southern Trust.

Forest & Bird members are offered a special price for a biography of architect Chapman-Taylor, *The Life and Times of James Walter Chapman-Taylor*, by Judy Siers. Pay \$120 (down from \$145) and a donation of \$20 will go to Forest & Bird. Send your cheque for \$125 (which includes courier cost) to Judy Siers, Millwood Heritage Productions, PO Box 12246, Ahuriri, Napier 4144.

