

Farmer's wife donates land she loves



GIFT: Elizabeth Law-Smith and property manager Leith Chester

By Environment Reporter
REBECCA JENKINS

DAVID Law-Smith would be delighted if he could see the plan to turn his farm into a woodland reserve.

Mr Law-Smith, of "Yaringa," near Gawler, died two years ago aged 81.

Today, his widow Elizabeth, 73, will hand over 350ha of the farm for woodland reserve.

"My husband was always very interested in conservation," she said. "He never wanted it (the farm) subdivided into housing."

The Law-Smiths have donated 118ha of land to the Nature Foundation SA. Another 232ha has been bought by the State Government.

The Law-Smith family has owned the property since 1920. Mrs Law-Smith married her late husband, who was a GP, in 1982.

"I feel we all need open space for our physical and mental wellbeing and so for the people of Gawler, this will be such a place - that's another reason why I did it," she said. "I'm delighted - I am sure

my husband would be utterly delighted as well."

The Para Woodland Reserve will include a walking trail to be dedicated to the memory of the late Mr Law-Smith.

There are patches of remnant vegetation in the reserve, but most is open farmland which will be gradually replanted. The area will become a haven for bird and wildlife.

Nature Foundation SA president Bob Sharrad says the donation of the land is an important step which shows great foresight.

"It will be good for conservation, but also the local people," he said.

"I think over the years we are going to look back at this as a most important thing."

Mr Sharrad said the project would provide a great insight into restoration projects throughout the state.

Reserve steering committee member ecologist Dr David Paton said it was important to rebuild large areas of habitat to protect threatened birdlife in the Mt Lofty Ranges and



at Yaringa yesterday and, right, a young David Law-Smith.

Picture: MARK BRAKE

Adelaide Plains. "Nine species have already gone and up to 70 others are suspected of declining, some very rapidly," he said.

"It takes probably 100 years to make good habitat that is self-sustaining and resilient.

"However if we do not start today, then every year we delay means fewer species left for future generations."

The reserve will be managed by a committee including Mrs Law-Smith and representa-

tives from government and the Nature Foundation.

She is also providing financial support to the reserve for the next 10 years.

Environment Minister John Hill will attend today's handover to thank the family on behalf of South Australians for the land gift and its commitment to conservation.

Mr Law-Smith's nephews will continue to run the farm on a portion of the property, not set aside for the reserve.

