Little Ouse Headwaters Project

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Broomscot Common - gorse experiment

**Garboldisham Primary School
and Reg Langston, LOHP volunteer**

The problem

All the gorse on Broomscot Common was getting very old. New growth was not happening because something was eating off all the new young shoots.

The gorse is important because birds can make safe nests among its dense spiky twigs and because lots of insects live in it.

The insects are food for birds - especially linnets.

In 2013 twelve pairs of linnets nested on the Common.

But there's room for many more.

We examined the gorse
shoots, the lichen and
the very sandy soil which
does not give plants many
nutrients for fast growth.

Who is doing the damage?

Clue 1

Who is doing the damage?

Clue 2

Stop here if you don't want the answer yet.

Rabbits!

What next?

- We worked on an experiment to find out how we could keep the rabbits off the gorse without changing any other growing conditions.
- We looked at possible covers: a plastic cloche - a cardboard box.
- We decided they would not do. They would have too many other effects on growth.
- We talked about the materials we would need and sketched our ideas.
- We talked about how we would decide whether our experiments had worked or not.

What materials did we choose?

What tools did we use?

We discussed different groups' approaches

We measured the young gorse inside the cage so that we could work out how much it grew.

Each cage is round some tiny gorse shoots

What does this gorse bush want?

Why wine bottles?

Me, Alex and James decided to have a dome covering the young gorse.
This would be supported by three bamboo canes.
Around the outside would be wine bottles which when the wind blew, would make a sound to scare away the animals.

George Odgers (Year 6)

This is their dome 18 months later.
Has it worked?
Is it the wine bottles or the wire?
How could we find out?

SUCCESS!

18 months later. The only young gorse bushes surviving are the ones the school children have protected.