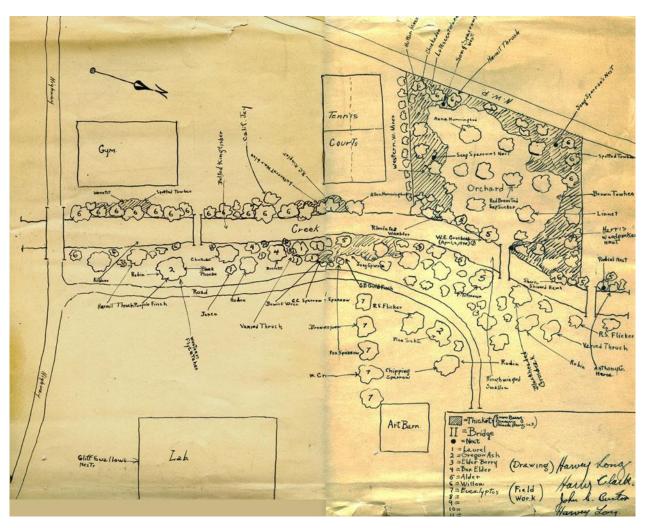
Birding on Campus in 1940

by Charles Kennard (2020)

A charming hand-drawn map of part of the College of Marin campus has recently come to light, giving us a glimpse of birdlife in 1940, prior to the concretization of Corte Madera Creek. This was a time when there were "paved highways and the interurban electric [railway] line providing transportation facilities" for the Marin Junior College, as described in the San Rafael Independent.

Three students, Harvey Long, John Burton and Harry Clark, probably all freshmen, noted down the vegetation and birdlife along a section of Corte Madera Creek from College Avenue upstream to an overgrown orchard within the campus limits, and recorded their findings on a map. We don't know over what period the survey was carried out. However, as a number of nests were recorded (song sparrow, robin, hairy woodpecker and cliff swallow), as well as observations of typically winter season birds (hermit thrush, golden-crowned sparrow, red-breasted sapsucker), the window may have been a spring semester.

Forty-one bird species were recorded—some perhaps with questionable accuracy. Relatively few riparian species or water-birds are featured: kingfisher, killdeer, great blue heron, black phoebe and roughwinged swallow. This in spite of a good number of willows, alders, box elders, and understory growing on both sides of the creek. Most of these birds are still seen in Ross Valley gardens; more interesting



Three College of Marin students made this map of campus birdlife in 1940. Present-day College Avenue runs along the left side, Corte Madera Creek traverses the center. The whole top section is now parking lots. Map courtesy of Paul da Silva

observations are: wrentit, warbling vireo, Hutton's vireo, fox sparrow, sharp-shinned hawk, and black-headed grosbeak.

In later life, Harry Clark operated the Larkspur Glass and Aluminum business, and lived until 1994. Harvey "Sonny" Long joined the Marines and sadly lost his life in a Pacific theater battle in the Kiribati archipelago in 1943; a Washington hawthorn tree was planted at Ross school as a memorial to this "outstanding nature student" the following Arbor Day.

Thanks are due to Paul da Silva for bringing the map to our attention, and to Parker Pringle for historical sleuthing.



Nearly contemporary with the map, this view by James Schulze is looking upstream from College Avenue toward a footbridge. Photo courtesy of Marin History Museum

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