

PASSERIFORMES

(Songbirds)

Gnatcatchers



Family POLIOPTILIDAE (Gnatcatchers)

Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*)



white below

HBVP; Henderson, NV



bold white eyering

Clark Co. Wetlands Pk; NV



Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve; Nevada



blue-gray above

Corn Creek; Desert NWR; NV



white outer tail feathers

Willow Spring; RRCNCA; NV

Measurements:

Length: 4" Wing Span: 6" Average Weight: .2 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

tiny size; blue-gray above, whitish below; long tail (**black above, white below**) with **white outer feathers**; slender, dark bill; dark eyes, white eyering; (**breeding m**) dark band on forehead extending over eyes; (**f**) more gray than blue

Notes:

common; mostly solitary; native to forests and scrublands of NA from s OR east to s ME, south to wintering grounds in s US and throughout MEX; 2 subspecies; forages in shrubbery for insects (not necessarily gnats), spiders

Mojave presence: summer range; some winter range

Comments:



It can be quite a challenge getting unobstructed views and photos of these tiny, active birds. When an opportunity does present itself, one telling field characteristic to aid in identification is the propensity to cock its tail high while perched, as performed by this specimen (left) modeling for me at the [Clark Co. Wetlands Park](#) in June, 2020. Another at the [Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve](#) demonstrated his outstretched landing technique (right).



Family POLIOPTILIDAE (Gnatcatchers)

Black-Tailed Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila melanura*)



Clark Co. Wetlands Pk; NV



Clark Co. Wetlands Pk; NV



Valley of Fire State Park; Clark County, NV



HBVP; Henderson, NV



Willow Beach; Lk Mead NRA

Measurements:

Length: 4" Wing Span: 5" Average Weight: .2 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

tiny size; blue-gray above, paler below; long, black tail (above and below) with thin white edges; pointed black bill; dark eyes, white eyering; (breeding m) black cap that extends to eyes; dark eyeline in non-breeding; (f) duller above

Notes:

uncommon; usually in pairs; inhabits desert scrub, canyons, etc., of sw NA from se CA east to sw TX, and s NV/sw UT south through c MEX; diet consists of small insects and spiders

Mojave presence: year-round in eastern region

Comments:

These tiny birds constantly flit about through dense shrubbery, making them notoriously difficult to photograph. However, these two--at the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve in March, 2022 (left), and Valley of Fire State Park in May, 2019 (right)--didn't just reveal themselves, they also showed off their agile aerial skills!

