

Minimum Qualifications
Coastal California Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*)
Effective date: July 13, 2020

A. Introduction

This document identifies minimum qualifications for conducting protocol surveys for coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*; gnatcatcher). These minimum qualifications are intended to ensure that an investigator has a broad range of experience that includes: 1) conducting focused surveys for coastal California gnatcatcher in accordance with the current survey protocol; 2) knowledge of coastal California gnatcatcher biology and habitat; 3) field identification of coastal California gnatcatchers and similar sympatric species; and 4) understanding how to minimize potential impacts to gnatcatchers while conducting surveys (e.g., recognizing nesting behavior in order to avoid disturbance of the nest).

B. Minimum Qualifications

1. Applicants must have experience conducting at least 6 protocol surveys at a minimum of 4 different sites under the direct supervision of a 10(a)(1)(A) permitted gnatcatcher biologist.
2. A minimum of 36 hours (not to exceed 6 hours per day in accordance with the survey protocol) must be spent surveying in gnatcatcher habitat with a permitted biologist. At least one gnatcatcher must be seen or heard during each individual survey to count toward the 36-hour requirement.
3. Male, female, and juvenile gnatcatchers must be observed over the course of the total accrued protocol survey experience (36 hours).
4. At least one protocol survey must be conducted at a site where the range of the gnatcatcher overlaps the range of the blue-gray gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*). Visual and auditory detection of blue-gray gnatcatchers is recommended but not required to meet the minimum qualifications.

Please note: while other experience such as incidental observations, surveys authorized by biological opinions, or other types of surveys may be good experience and worthwhile to document for our review, it is considered additional experience and does not count towards the 36-hour minimum standard.

C. Verifiable Documentation

The applicant must document their field experience acquired under supervision and submit the following information with their recovery permit application:

1. The title of the report (identified on the official survey report submitted to the Recovery Permit Coordinator at the Carlsbad or Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office);
2. The location, including County name, if not identified in the report title;

3. The dates, and start/end times of surveys;
4. The number, age, and sex of gnatcatchers detected;
5. Behaviors observed and vocalizations detected, if any;
6. Similar sympatric species observed or vocalizations heard, if any;
7. The name and permit number of the supervising permittee;
8. Copies of the applicant's field notes; and
9. A letter of recommendation from each supervising permittee. The permittee must:
 - a. Confirm the experience conducted under their supervision as provided by the applicant under numbers 1 through 6 above;
 - b. Provide their name, permit number, and contact information; and
 - c. Sign and date the letter.
10. We recommend that an experience table be submitted with the application following the sample template below, which is also found at:

https://www.fws.gov/cno/es/recovery_permitting/documents/?dir=Acquiring%20Field%20Experience

Refer to: “Coastal California Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) Presence/Absence Survey Protocol”

https://www.fws.gov/cno/es/recovery_permitting/documents/?dir=Survey%20Protocols%20%26%20Survey%20Guidelines/Birds/Coastal%20California%20Gnatcatcher

