

USACE Natural Resource Management

Non-migratory Birds



Coastal California Gnatcatcher

FAST FACTS

REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS: In March of 1993, the Coastal California Gnatcatcher was listed as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This subspecies has a restricted distribution along the coast of California and is found in habitat highly coveted for land development.

The explosive human population growth of the last 50 years has resulted in the reduction and fragmentation of coastal sage scrub habitat. Moreover, as habitat has become more fragmented, parasitization by Brown-headed Cowbirds has increased.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: The USFWS designated revised final critical habitat for the Coastal California Gnatcatcher under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. In total, approximately 197,303 acres of habitat in San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Ventura Counties, California, were designated as critical habitat for the Coastal California Gnatcatcher. This revised final designation constitutes a reduction of 298,492 acres from the 2003 revised proposed rule.

HABITAT NEEDS: The Coastal California gnatcatcher primarily occupies habitat that can be categorized as coastal scrub or coastal sage scrub.

- Habitat is typified by low shrubs (<3ft) and sub-shrub species that are often drought-deciduous.
- Plant species composition varies, but California sagebrush is usually dominant or co-dominant.
- Population numbers are typically low in areas dominated by black sage, white sage, or lemonadeberry.
- Sometimes found in chaparral, riparian, or disturbed habitats, particularly when these habitats are located adjacent to coastal sage scrub. However, population density is often higher in coastal areas than inland sites.
- More open areas are occupied more frequently than areas with dense scrub.

Height: This subspecies grows to approximately 4.5 inches in length and weighs between 0.2-0.3 OZ. (*All About Birds, Cornell*)

Color: This small songbird's back is comprised of dark blue-gray feathers while its underside is gray-white. Wings are brownish in color and the long tail is predominantly black with some white outer feathers. During the summer, males have a black cap which is absent during the winter months. Both sexes have a white ring around the eye. (*USFWS*)

Photo Credit: National Audubon Society

Natural Resource Management (NRM)

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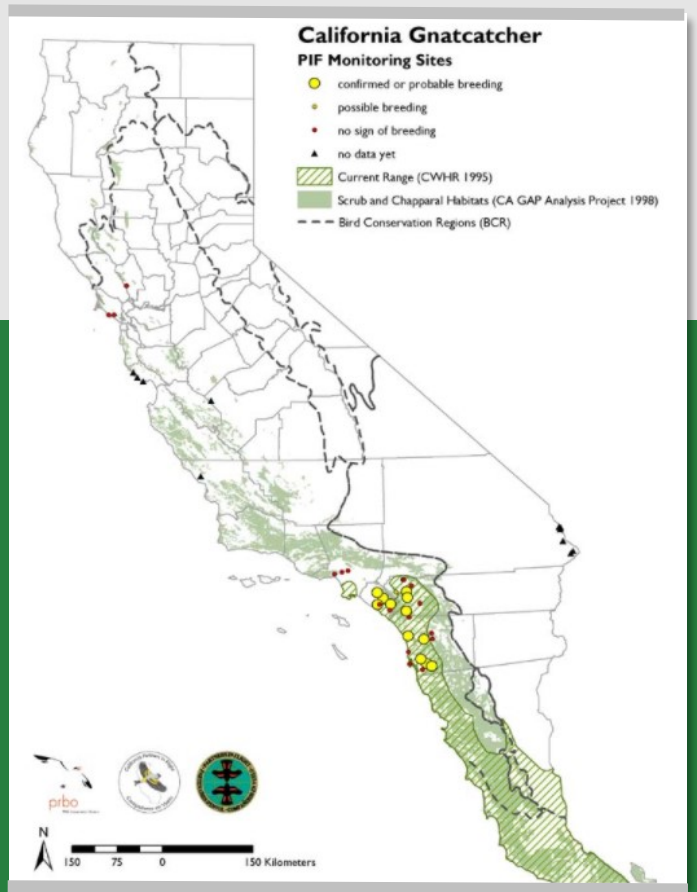


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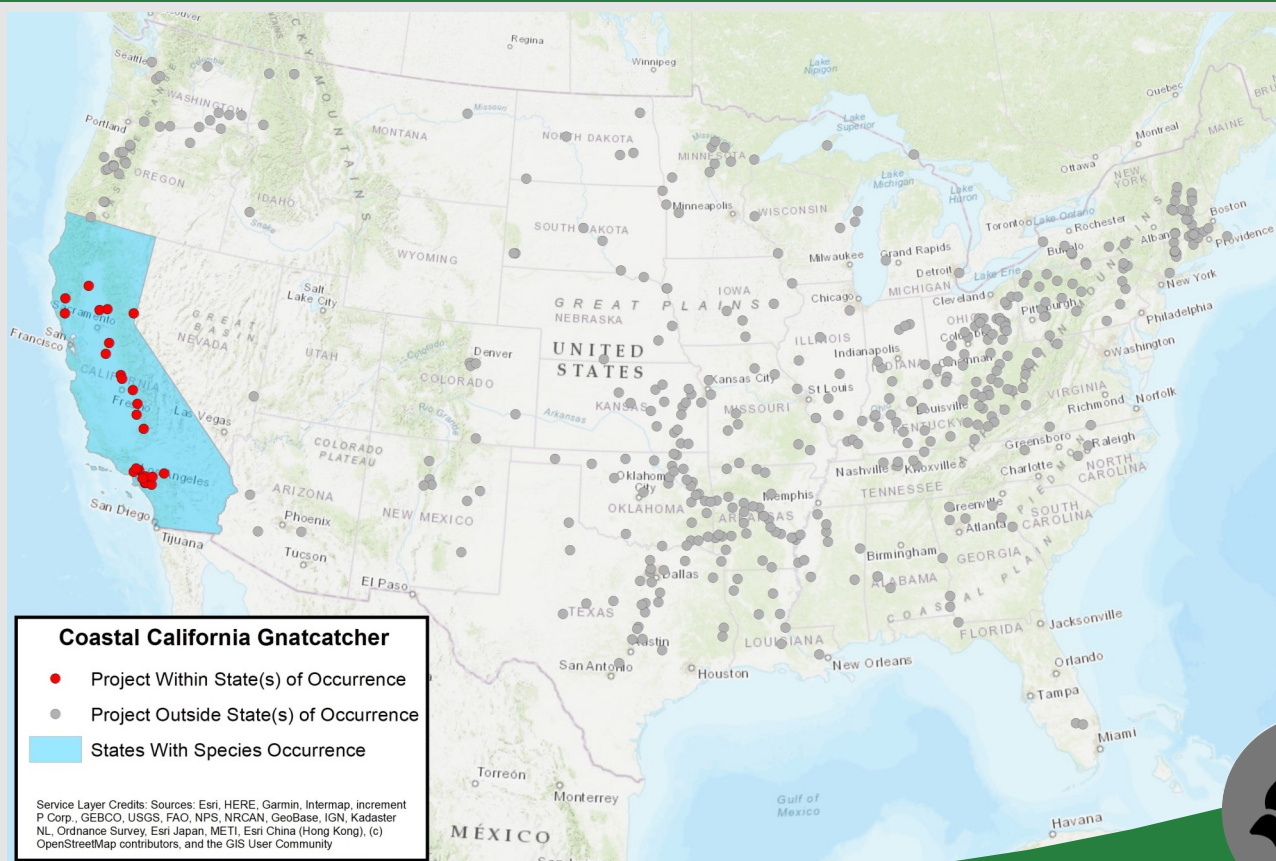
USACE ROLE: Since 2006, USACE has expended \$2,342,441 on efforts related to the Coastal California Gnatcatcher. Of that sum, \$14,000 was expended on researching this subspecies. \$108,440 has been put toward inventorying, surveying, and monitoring. \$1,295,940 was put toward the protection, construction, and restoration of habitat. (*ERDC– USACE Threatened and Endangered Species Costs*)

WHAT IS USACE NRM DOING:

- 1** In an effort to monitor the Coastal California Gnatcatcher population on USACE operated lands, Los Angeles District staff perform and routinely contract surveys for the gnatcatcher as well as for other listed species.
- 2** The Whittier Narrows Dam Basin is currently (2020) undergoing a major habitat restoration project for the Coastal California Gnatcatcher and the Least Bell’s Vireo, a federally endangered species. The project entails restoration of approximately 60-acres of vireo habitat (riparian willow scrub habitat) and 286-acres of invasive plant removal to aid in recovery.



Map Above: This Partner’s In Flight map for the Coastal California Gnatcatcher depicts monitoring sites and current range of the species in southern California.



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- Project Within State(s) of Occurrence
- Project Outside State(s) of Occurrence
- States With Species Occurrence

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Source: Map provided by Ashleigh Boss, ORISE Fellowship, Institute for Water Resources

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