



IOS IORC &lt;iorcommittee@gmail.com&gt;

## IORC Documentation Submission

1 message

**IORC Web Submission** <iorcommittee@gmail.com>

Tue, Mar 19, 2019 at 10:37 AM

Reply-To: iorcommittee@gmail.com

To: iorcommittee@gmail.com

1) This form submitted as supporting documentation of (check all that apply):	Unusual date
If other, please describe:	
2) Species:	Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher
3) Number of birds:	1
4) Age/Sex/Plumage:	Unknown. Not a breeding male, as black facial marking not seen.
5) Date:	2019-03-15
6) Location (include county):	Mermet Lake, Massac County
7) Observers:	Allen Gathman, Mark Haas
8) Your name:	Allen Gathman
Street Address	██████████
Street Address Line 2	
City	██████████
State / Province / Region	██
Postal / Zip Code	██████
Country	██████████
10) Your e-mail address:	████████████████████
11) Others agreeing with the identification:	None
12) Observers NOT agreeing with the identification:	None
13) Description of bird (size, shape, proportions, details of both color and pattern on head, back, chin, throat, breast, flanks, wings, undertail, and tail, etc.; coloration of soft parts: bill, legs, and feet) include only details actually seen in the field :	About the size of a chickadee but more slender with long tail. "Shape of a miniature mockingbird," as Mark said at the time. Back and head bluish-gray; breast and belly white, with white outer tail retrices and white eye-ring. Held wings with tips drooping slightly at its sides. Slender, pointed bill.
14) Description of behavior:	Actively foraging in the tops of bare trees. Rapidly flitting around among the branches. When Mark came over to look, I played the BGGN song on my phone and the bird immediately responded by moving closer to us in the trees.

15) Description of vocalizations:	None
16) Description of immediate and surrounding habitat(s):	We were on the road on the north end of Mermet Lake. The lake was behind us to the south, and the north side of the road was forested; trees had not yet leafed out. We were observing a small mixed flock of birds, including two White-breasted Nuthatches, two Red-breasted nuthatches, a Golden-crowned Kinglet, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Tufted Titmouse, and Carolina Chickadees. All the birds were in the trees immediately at the edge of the woods, next to the road. It was windy, about 10-15 miles per hour from the south with higher gusts; the previous day had been extremely windy, also blowing primarily from the south. The BGGN was in the upper parts of the trees about 25-30 feet high.
17) Optical equipment used for observation (type, power):	Both observers used 10x binoculars.
18) Distance/how measured?	Estimated height of trees at 25-30 feet, both observers agreeing; the trees were no more than ten feet from the road where we were standing, so distance to bird approximately 30-35 feet.
19) Time of observation:	10:05 am
20) Total time of observation:	First observer watched bird uninterrupted for about 1 minute; second observer (Haas) observed about 30 seconds.
21) Weather conditions:	Overcast but bright, with gusty breeze from the south. Temperature about 45 degrees. Light from behind us and slightly to the right, but diffuse due to clouds.
22) Previous experience with this species and similar species:	Both of us see BGGNs regularly throughout their normal season in southeast Missouri and southern Illinois. Mark Haas had recently been on a birding trip to the Rio Grande in Texas, where he'd seen lots of BGGNs. I hadn't seen one since last year, but I have entered 395 records of this species in eBird. The other small passerines we saw in the mixed flock are also quite common in the area, and both of us see them on a regular basis. I've never seen a Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, but I believe it can be eliminated; see below.
23) Please eliminate other similar species and/or hybrids:	Titmouse can be eliminated due to lack of crest, and presence of eyering and white outer tail feathers, as well as size. Either kinglet would have a wing stripe (or "T"), which was absent in this bird, and a much shorter tail. The nuthatches both have even shorter tails. WBNU has a white cheek, RBNU has black and white cheek stripes, neither of which were seen on this bird. Black-tailed Gnatcatcher can be eliminated by gray and white (rather than black and white) tail, and lack of black cap or "eyebrow" -- and in any case would be wildly improbable.
24) Were photos obtained?	No
25) If so, by whom?	NA
26) Books and illustrations consulted and advice received. How did these influence this description?:	After observing and recording oral notes on my phone, I looked at Sibley to compare what we'd recorded with the field marks in the book. They matched well. The book was consulted after making the notes, so no influence on the description. I looked up Black-tailed Gnatcatcher on the Cornell site to contrast it, and used their field marks to eliminate that species.
27) How long after the observation were field notes recorded?	About five minutes; I recorded on the phone and Mark and I both made comments then.
28) How long after the observation was this form completed?	4 days.
29) Additional remarks (URLs can be entered	Wish I could have gotten a photo; as is typical for BGGN, the bird was so active that it wasn't possible to catch it on camera. We were aware while

here):

observing the bird that it was unusually early, so paid close attention to the ID and recorded notes immediately.