






About Our Cover

The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*) is a small songbird of deciduous forests and scrublands. It is the northernmost-occurring gnatcatcher species, and the only one that breeds in eastern North America. Adult males are blue-gray above and white below and have a long black tail with white borders, a white eye ring, and a black brow stripe. Females lack the black brow stripe. These birds actively forage in trees and shrubs, mainly eating small insects and spiders. The male bird in this photograph is feeding on Eastern Tent Caterpillars (*Malacosoma americanum*). This social caterpillar species forms communal nests in tree branches in the plant family Rosaceae, including cherry (*Prunus*) and apple (*Malus*). The caterpillars typically spend the whole of their larval lives at the tent site, emerging to feed and then returning to the tent until the next feeding period. When fully grown, the caterpillars disperse and construct cocoons. Adult moths emerge about 2 weeks later. The image was taken by Laura K. Palmer, Associate Professor of Biology at Penn State Altoona, at midday on 18 May 2013 on the Limestone Trail at Canoe Creek State Park, Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, using a Canon Rebel T3i camera and 75-300mm f/4-5.6 zoom lens.

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