

GOT GNATCATCHERS?

QUICK STATS

- ✘ **CONFERENCE:** Spending
- ✘ **TEAM:** Department of Defense
- **FUMBLE:** \$283,500 gnatcatcher survey
- **HOW TO RECOVER THE BALL:** Congress should establish a policy that all grants issued by the Department of Defense must support national security

FWS listed the coastal CAGN, a tiny blue-gray bird, as a “threatened” species in 1993. Earlier this year, DOD issued a grant worth \$283,500 to survey “at least ten California gnatcatcher (CAGN) pairs in order to determine use throughout each vegetation alliance.” Thankfully DOD provides an explanation for this, which includes monitoring of CAGN nests, the ability of baby CAGNs to learn to fly, and the temperature and availability of food around the nest. The surveyor would also document any instances of cowbirds, another small bird, laying eggs in CAGN nests. (Note: Evidently the Cowbirds tend to do this for some reason.)⁴³

In what universe should DOD spend \$283,500 to study the day-to-day life of a tiny bird? How is American national security strengthened by this study? DOD should be in the business of defense, not nature conservancy. First, there is an entire federal agency that does things like this: FWS. Second, any project like this, regardless of the agency in charge, should always have to publically demonstrate the

purpose and rationale for any grant, and publicly release the findings afterwards.



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RECOVERY

Congress should work with DOD to ensure there are no federal restrictions to the Department remaining completely focused on keeping the homeland safe. DOD should not feel obligated to fulfill the mission of other federal agencies. It has a tough enough job already.

For more information, please visit:

[Grants.gov: Coastal California Gnatcatcher Habitat Use Study and Population Surveys at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California](#)
[U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: Coastal California Gnatcatcher](#)