

Organizing image files in Lightroom part 2

Hopefully, after our last issue, you've spent some time working on your folder structure and now have your images organized to be easy to find. Whether you have placed all of your images into one folder to lessen the chances of confusion and missing images later or you have decided to use a multi folder system with images organized by subject or location, Lightroom offers some tools to further sort out and classify your images. Those tools are Flags, Star Ratings, Color Labels and Keyword Tags. Here in Part 2 we'll look a little deeper into those tools.

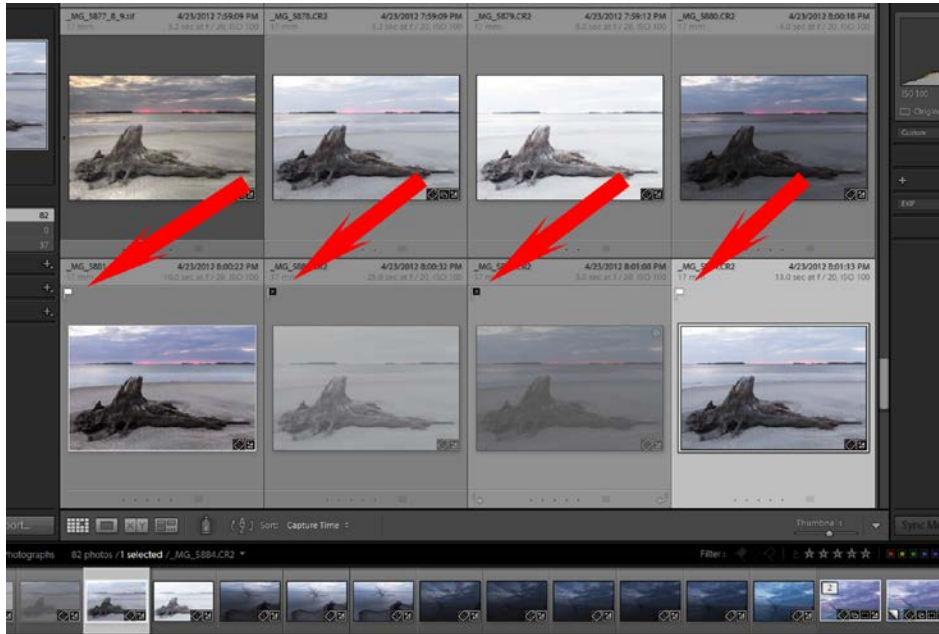


Photo 1. Pick and Reject flags assigned to images. Note that the Rejected images are “Grayed Out.”

the bad ones. Perhaps an image is out of focus or the exposure is wrong. These images get a “reject” flag. The fastest and easiest way to do this is to select the image and hit the “X” key on your keyboard. Lightroom places a black flag with an X through it, I refer to it as the pirate flag, on the image. You will also notice that if you select a different image Lightroom will “grey out” the rejected image. Lightroom hasn’t really done anything with the image. It’s still available, it hasn’t been deleted or anything, and you can change the flag in case you made a mistake. (see photo 1) But it does make things a little easier once you decide to delete the rejected images. When you have sifted through all of your images and you are ready to delete the rejects click on the “Photos” menu and select “Delete Rejected Photos” from the bottom of that menu. You will be given an option to delete them permanently (Delete From Disc) or just remove those images from Lightroom. I do this with each batch of imported images to get rid of the junk so that only my better images move forward from this point.

The next step for me will be to flag the best images as “picks” and this can be done in one of two ways. If I find an image that’s good enough to take into the Develop Module and optimize it gets a pick flag. If I take an image into the Develop Module to see if it can be improved and I’m happy with the result it gets a pick flag. In either case hit the “P” key on the keyboard and the image will get a white flag and a thin white border. When looking at a group of images in the

The first step in my workflow, after the images have been imported, involves the use of flags. An image may have any one of three flag states. An image can be flagged as a “pick,” it can be flagged as a “reject,” or it may have no flag at all. Right after my import is complete I’ll take a good look

through those images looking for

Grid View it's now easy to see which images are flagged and which are not. Lightroom goes one step further and allows us to look at only those images which have been flagged.

We use a coffee filter to hold back the coffee grounds and let the good coffee come through and so Lightroom lets us apply a filter to see the images we wish to look at and hold back the images we don't want to see. To do so we must turn on the Filters. In the Grid View on the right end of the black bar that separates the Grid from the Filmstrip there is a small white toggle that controls the Filters. Simply click it to turn the Filters on or off. In order to see just the Picked or Flagged images click on the Flag filter, the first of the three flag icons, and the view will filter to just those images with Pick flags. By the way if you don't see the filter icons, Flags, Stars, and Color Labels, then the list is collapsed. Click on the word Filter to expand it. (see photo 2) You may also use the Flag Filter buttons to filter the view to images with no flag or images with the reject flag if you have not deleted them yet. Just remember to turn each filter off by clicking it again before you select the next one. Just as you flip the switch to turn the lights on as you enter a room you must flip that switch again to turn them off. If you are not careful here you could have all three Filters, Pick, Reject, and Unflagged, on simultaneously in which case you would be looking at everything! If you have placed a flag on an image by mistake you can change it by simply hitting the appropriate flag key or using the "U" (Unflag) key to remove any flag.

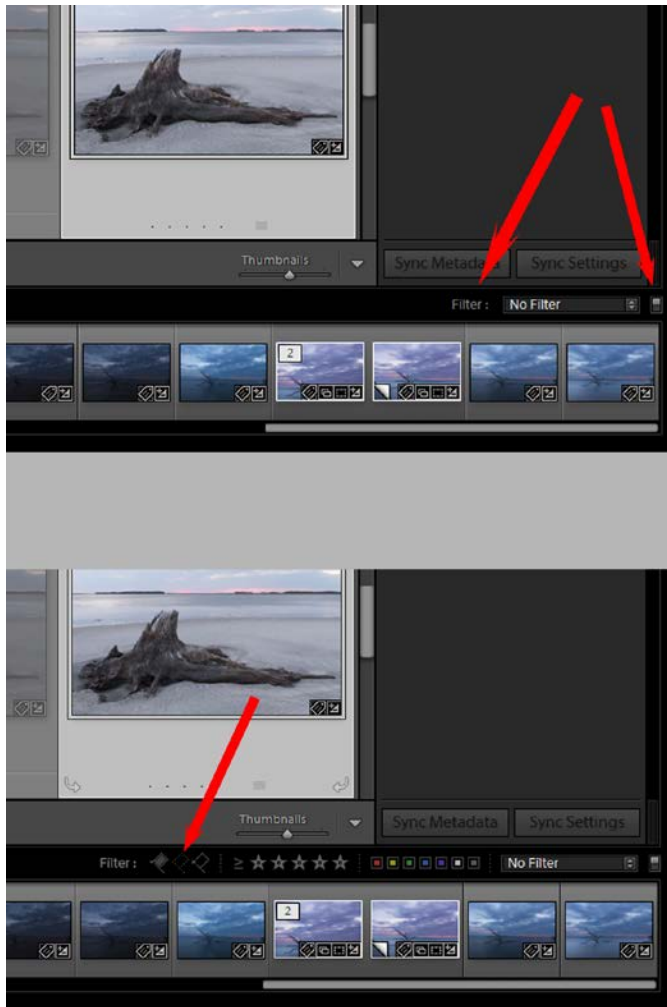


Photo 2. Filter toggle turned on but no Filter applied. Top; Filter group collapsed. Bottom; Filter list expanded. Click on the word Filter to expand or contract the list. Click on the appropriate Filter Button to apply that filter.

Just those images with Pick flags. By the way if you don't see the filter icons, Flags, Stars, and Color Labels, then the list is collapsed. Click on the word Filter to expand it. (see photo 2) You may also use the Flag Filter buttons to filter the view to images with no flag or images with the reject flag if you have not deleted them yet. Just remember to turn each filter off by clicking it again before you select the next one. Just as you flip the switch to turn the lights on as you enter a room you must flip that switch again to turn them off. If you are not careful here you could have all three Filters, Pick, Reject, and Unflagged, on simultaneously in which case you would be looking at everything! If you have placed a flag on an image by mistake you can change it by simply hitting the appropriate flag key or using the "U" (Unflag) key to remove any flag.

Star Ratings work very similarly to Flags. Any image can be rated from zero to five Stars. Star Ratings can be applied to an image by hitting the appropriate number key on the keyboard. In other words, hitting a 2 will assign a rating of two Stars to an image while hitting a 5 will assign five Stars. Images can, of course, be filtered according to their Star Rating with one minor point. With the filters turned on and the filter list

expanded, looking closely at the Star Rating Filter buttons will reveal a modifier. (see photo 3) This modifier can be set to Equal To, Less Than or Equal To, or Greater than or Equal To. Thus, if the modifier is set to Equal To and you click the Three Star button, you will only see your Three Star images. However, if the modifier is set to Greater than or Equal To and you click the Three Star button, you will see your Three, Four, and Five Star images. For me the Star Ratings and their associated filter are the least useful of the three classification tools. My images tend to

be good or not good and I don't find a need to use a good, better, best type of rating. That is not to say however that it won't work for you.

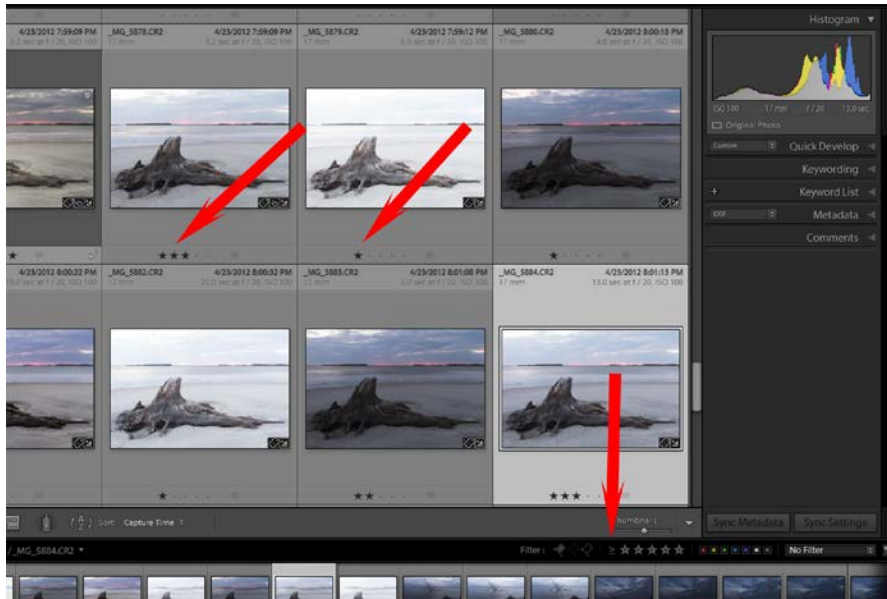


Photo 3. Star Ratings assigned to images. Note the Modifier in the Filter bar. Select Equal to, Greater Than or Equal to, or Less than or Equal To when applying a Rating Star Filter.

surrounding that image in the chosen color if the image is not selected or a thin rim around the image in that color if the image is selected. (see photo 4) Filtering also works the same way. Clicking on the Yellow Filter will show only the Yellow Labeled images and so on. Color Labels may be used to designate anything you like, there is no right or wrong. If I have an image in an online gallery it gets a Blue Label. If I have chosen an image for a book project it gets a Yellow Label. Use them for whatever you see fit.

I'll be the first to admit that the filtering system in Lightroom can get complicated and confusing. Keep in mind that it is certainly not necessary to use all three. Just because the tools are there doesn't mean that you are required to use them. Pick one and stick with it until you have mastered it. One other point of confusion is failing to treat the individual filters as toggles. If you turn it on you must turn it off.

At the risk of being completely redundant, Color Labels work in exactly the same way. Color Labels are assigned using the keyboard numbers 6 for Red, 7 for Yellow, 8 for Green, 9 for Blue. The exception is Purple which must be set by Right-clicking an image and choosing it from the Set Color Label menu or choosing Set Color Label from the Photo menu

across the top. Images with a color label will have the entire cell

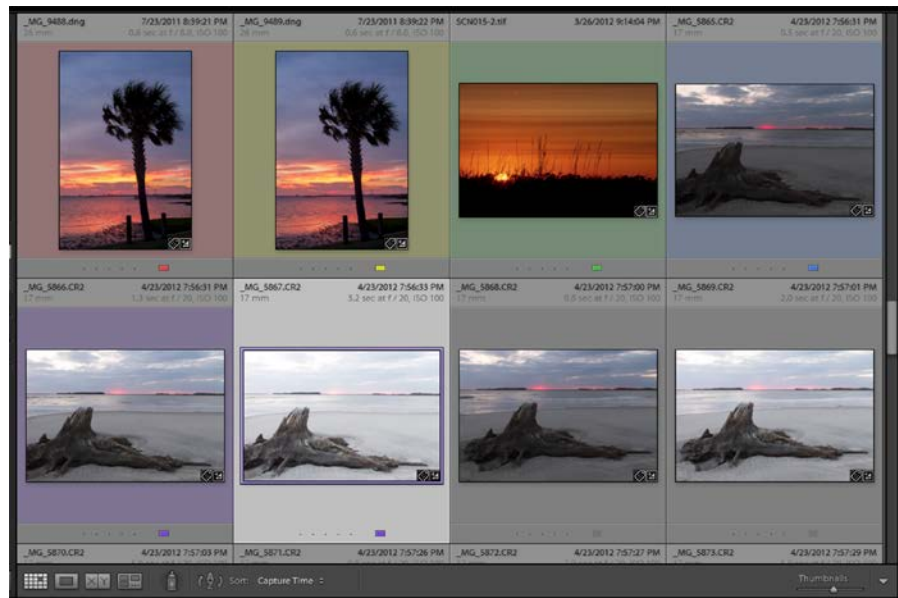


Photo 4. Color Labels assigned to images. Note that the first two images in the bottom row are both labeled Purple. This shows the difference in how the Color Labels are displayed for an image that is selected and one that is not selected.

If you turn it on you must turn it off.

If you get into trouble and you are not seeing the images you think you should be seeing simply turn the filtering system off with the little switch at the right end of the black bar. If that switch is off and you have All Photographs selected under Catalog at the top of the Left Panel you should be seeing everything that is in that Catalog.

Keyword Tags are words or groups of words appended to an image and used to describe that image, it's location, or the objects it contains. Keyword Tags can be short and simple or drawn out and complex as your needs dictate. At the very least Keyword Tags should describe the primary subject in the image. An image of a great egret, for instance, could simply have the Keyword Tag Great Egret or it could have the Keyword Tags Animal, Bird, Egret, Great Egret, Charleston, South Carolina, Magnolia Plantation, Audubon Swamp Garden. If you sell your images online, or plan to, I definitely recommend the latter. It makes your images much easier for online users to search and find your images.

Keywords are entered in the Library Module on the right panel under Keywording. Place your cursor into the smaller "Click here to add keywords" window and type your Keywords there. (see photo 5) Use commas to separate Keywords as in South Carolina, Beach, Sand, Ocean, Waves, etc. Type your Keywords in any order and, when you hit the Enter key, Lightroom will arrange them alphabetically. Be consistent in your use of capital letters and plurals. Lightroom sees Ocean and ocean or Bird and Birds as two different Keywords. This could lead to difficulty later when trying to find a specific image.

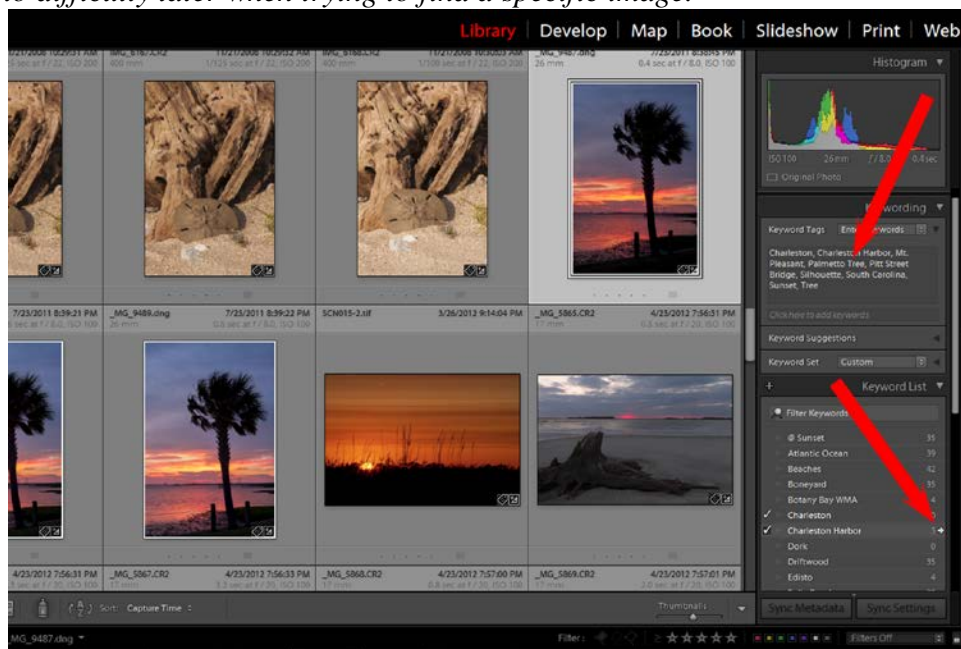


Photo 5. Shown here are the Keyword Tags that are applied to the selected image. Also shown is the small white arrow to click when you want to filter to just those images with the selected keyword. In this case the filter will show all three images with the Keyword "Charleston Harbor" applied.

down to just those images with the assigned Keyword. The number next to the arrow indicates the number of images with that Keyword applied.

So how does all of this work together? Let's say I have a catalog containing about 90 thousand images. Within that catalog are about three hundred images of the Arthur Ravenel Bridge here in Charleston, all shot at different times and all keyworded appropriately. About ten of those images have been edited and optimized to be the best and those images are marked with

To find an image with a particular Keyword use the Keyword List Panel. The Keyword List is an alphabetical list of every keyword you have ever used. You'll notice that when hovering your cursor over the Keywords in the list that a small white arrow appears at the right hand edge of that keyword. Clicking the arrow will filter your view

a Pick Flag. Now, let's say that a client calls and need images of the bridge for a magazine article. I don't really have time to sift through thousands of images hoping to come across the good shots of the bridge. So first I click on the arrow for the Keyword Tag "Arthur Ravenel Bridge." Now I turn on the filtering toggle and click the Flag button for my "best of the best" bridge images. In less than 15 seconds and with just three mouse clicks I have filtered my full catalog down to just ten images.

I hope that this somewhat brief look into the organizational tools contained within Lightroom has helped you to understand just how powerful this program can be. I also hope it has motivated you to spend some time organizing your images.

Captions

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