Keywords In Lightroom (Revised)

Notes by Greg Henton

Keywords

- With keywording, you get out what you put in. Poorly planned keywording haphazardly or inconsistently applied with leave you disappointed, where a well thought out strategy consistently applied will give you a powerful tool to find images.

- What are they?

  - Keywords are words that describe notable features of an image.

  - There are no limits to the number of keywords an image may have.

  - There are no restrictions on what keywords can be, and there are no "standard" keywords.

  - A keyword may actually be more than one word. Lightroom uses commas to delimit keywords, not spaces (this is not a universal practice however, other programs may require you to put double quotes around keywords that contain spaces).

- Why are they important?

  - Keywords allow you and others to quickly search a large collection of images for those that possess particular characteristics described by the keyword.

- What to consider when Choosing Keywords.

  - Who is in the picture

  - What is in the picture

  - Where was the picture taken

  - Why did you take the picture

  - How are you likely to search for the picture

  - Events

  - Special Criteria or Uses

    - Textures

- Sky Replacements

- Award Entries or Winners

- Techniques such as Panos or HDR

- Classifications

- Avoid using keywords that replicate information already available as standardized metadata such as "Camera Type", "Lens Type", "Aperture" etc.

- Where are keywords kept?

  - Keywords become part of an image's metadata, that is data about the image which is not part of the image itself.

  - As part of the image's metadata, Lightroom may store the keywords in the image file, catalog file and/or the xmp sidecar file.

- Lightroom Keyword List.

  - Minimally, Lightroom also keeps a list of all keywords used in any given catalog. This list can be exported as a simple text file, and a text file keyword list may be imported to a Lightroom catalog. This means that the keyword list may also contain keywords not used by any of the images.

  - Lightroom uses a hierarchally structured keyword system, which means that keywords can contain or be contained in other keywords.

- Keyword visibility on export.

  - When an image file is exported, Lightroom will attach keywords to the file's metadata. By default, any higher order keyword in a hierarchal list will be exported along with the lower order keyword. Lightroom gives you the option of hiding higher order keywords, allowing you to create "administrative" keywords to help organize your keyword list, but not have them actually appear in the exported image's keywords.

  - Lightroom also allows you to create keyword synonyms which may also be exported.

  - "Person" keywords are a special feature of Lightroom associated with face recognition and will not be discussed here. See the following link for more information:
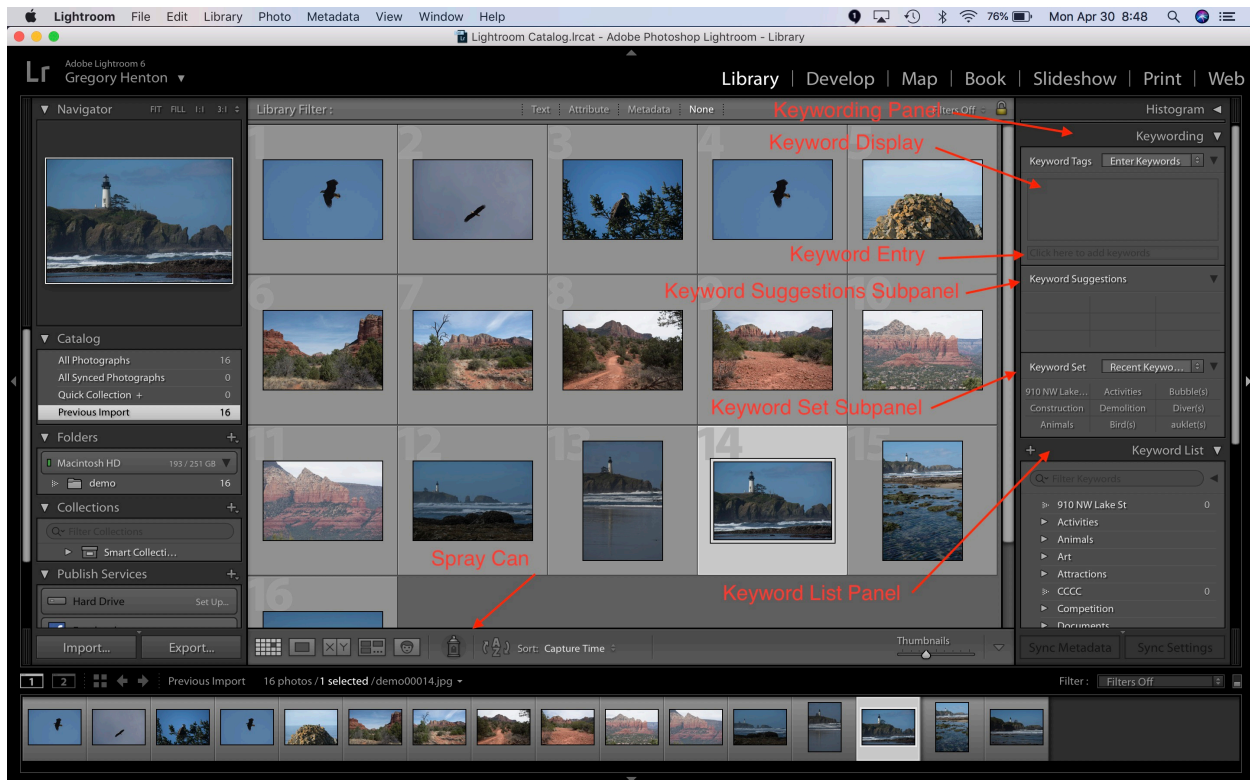
    http://www.adobepress.com/articles/article.asp?p=2337458&seqNum=4

Fig. 1

Assigning Keyword to Images

- Before you can use keyword searches to find specific images, you must assign keywords to those images. Lightroom provides several methods for assigning keywords to images, either singly or in groups.

- Assigning Keywords on Import.

  • Lightroom allows you to assign keywords on import. Multiple key words may be assigned, separated by commas. The advantages and disadvantages of the application of keywords in this manner is the same, all of the images of that given import will be given all of the input keywords.

- Assigning keywords using the "Keywording" Panel on the right hand side of the screen (Fig. 1).

  • With the exception of assigning keywords on import, all keyword assigning is done in the Library Mode.

- Highlight the image or images you wish to assign a keyword to in grid mode, or open the image in loop mode.

- Open the "Keywording" Section of the right panel if it is not already open (Fig. 1). To the right of the words "Keyword Tags" you will see a drop down menu that by default says "Enter Keywords" The two other choices, "Keywords and Containing Keywords" and "Will Export" apply to hierarchal keywording. The "Keywords and Containing Keywords" will show all of the higher level keyword to the entered keywords and their relationships, the "Will Export" will show the keywords that will be exported with the image file.

- Below the drop down list are two boxes, one that looks like it could hold about 5 lines of text, and below it one that can only hold one line of text and has in dark print "Click her to add keywords". If "Enter Keywords" is chosen from the drop down list, you can enter keywords in either box; if one of the other dropdown selections is made, you must use the lower box.

- Enter the keyword you wish to add to the image. If you have not used that keyword before, it will be added to the keyword list that Lightroom keeps for the catalog, as well as to the image. As you type Lightroom will show you keywords in the list that match what you have typed so far, and you can choose the keyword from this list rather than finish typing the keyword. Lightroom will also place last keyword you used which matches the letters you typed in at the top of the list to facilitate keywording similar pictures.

- You can enter more than one keyword at a time by separating them by commas (remember, spaces are NOT delimiters in Lightroom keywording).

- Assigning one or more keywords to more than one image at a time must be done in Grid View, simply highlight the images you wish to keyword. You can use the standard Cmd(Ctlr)-Left Click and Shift-Left Click to select more than one image. Remember this only works in grid view. In Loop and other modes, only the image displayed will be assigned the keyword even though more than one image might be highlighted on the filmstrip below.

- Keywords and Stacked images. Stacking images is a feature of Lightroom to group similar images as a special group (for example, the different EVs of a series of bracketed images). In grid view, when images are stacked, Lightroom can display a single image representing the stack ("Collapsed") or all of the images of the stack ("Expanded"). In grid mode, only the displayed image of a collapsed

stack will be keyworded. If you wish to keyword all of the images of a stack, it is important that you expand the stack or stacks before keywording.

- To remove a keyword, you need to select "Enter Keywords" from the drop down menu and edit out the unwanted keywords from the upper text box (Keyword Display, Fig. 1).

- If you have more than one image selected in grid view, and you see an asterisk by one of the keywords, that means that at least one of the images does not contain that keyword. If you select "Enter Keywords" and remove the asterisk from that keyword, it will be assigned to all of the selected images.

- Below the area where you can enter keywords are two expandable boxes. The first call "Keyword Suggestions" (Fig. 1) hold a list of 9 keywords that Lightroom thinks you might wish to add to your image. This list appears to be selected by some internal algorithm based on recently used keywords and keywords that you often use together. This box is opened or closed by a black arrow on the right.
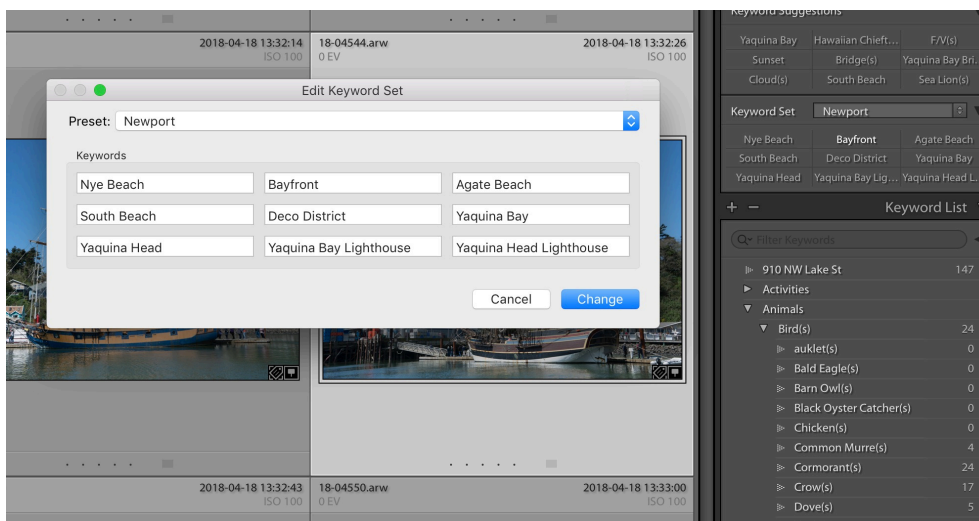

Fig. 2

- Below that is a similar looking array of 9 keywords called "Keyword Set" (Fig. 1). By default, this is set to "Recent Keywords," a dynamic selection which keeps track of recent keywords. However, this set of keywords may be changed to different static sets, some of which Lightroom provides, and some of which you can create. To create your own Keyword Set, Click the dropdown list and choose a set to modify. Then again use the drop down box and choose "Edit Set." Enter your desired keywords in the dialog box that appears over the original keywords, and if necessary delete any keywords you don't want (Fig. 2). Then in the top of

5

the dialog box where the title of the keyword set is, choose "Save Current Settings as New Preset…" from the drop down dialog. Give your Keyword Set a new name and press enter. You will see now that your new Keyword set is now loaded, and its name appears in the dropdown menu for later use. Note, if you press "Change" while editing the keyword list, a new keyword list will be created with the same name with "(edited)" appended to it. This is a temporary Keyword Set, and will disappear once you switch from it. To save it, use the "Save Current Settings as New Preset…" as described above before leaving it.

- *Tip: If you find sets useful, you might create a set with all of the entries deleted and save it with a name such as "Blank". You can then load this set every time you wish to create a new set, and not have to modify an existing set.*

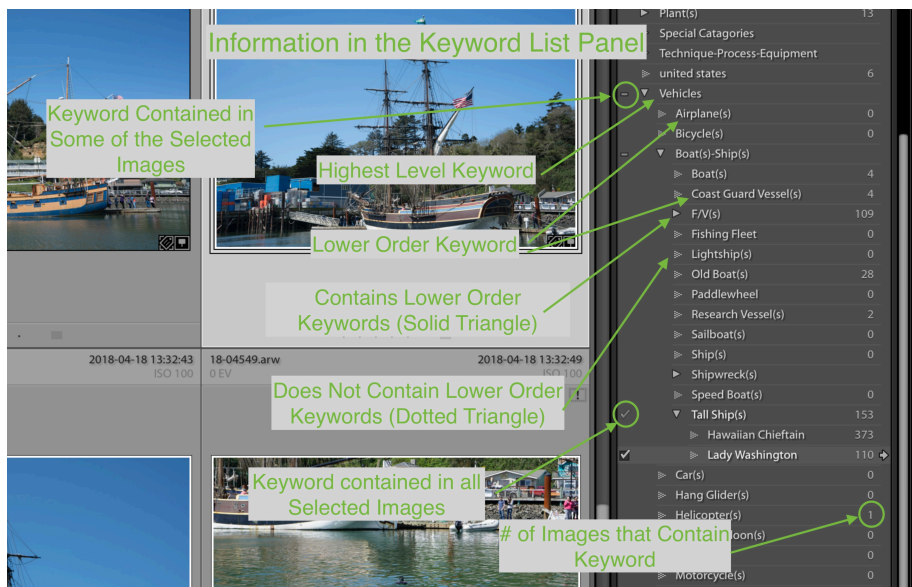- Assigning keywords using the "Keyword List" Section on the right panel.

Fig. 3

• As a first step, you may wish to import a keyword list, either that you exported from a different catalog or created in a text editor. To import such a list, in the library module, choose Metadata from the top menu and select "Import Keywords…" and select the appropriate file. This is not necessary though, you may simply wish to use the keyword list that has evolved from keyword entry in the catalog.

• Select the image you wish to add the keyword to, remember to use grid view to select more than one image. Find the keyword you wish to add in the list. If you
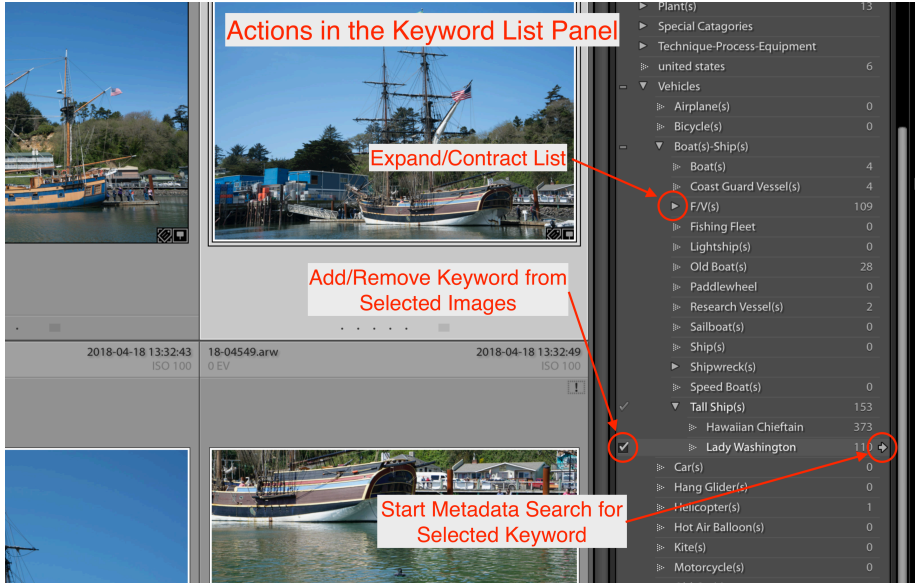
Fig. 4

cannot find the keyword, use the search box just under the "Keyword List" heading. If you wish to add a keyword no in the list, press the plus sign to the right of the heading "Keyword List" or right click on one of the entries on the list (Fig. 5A).
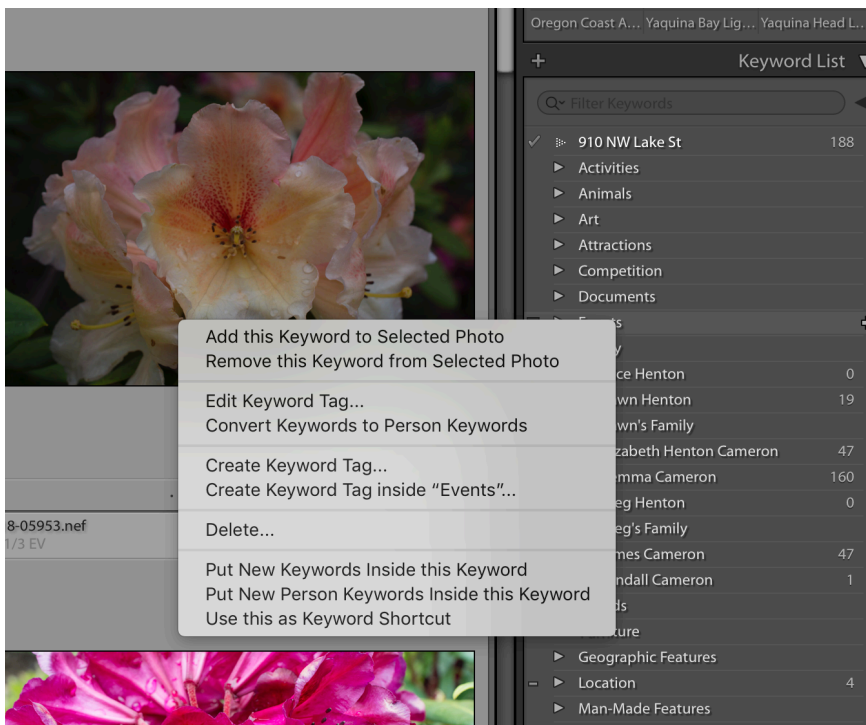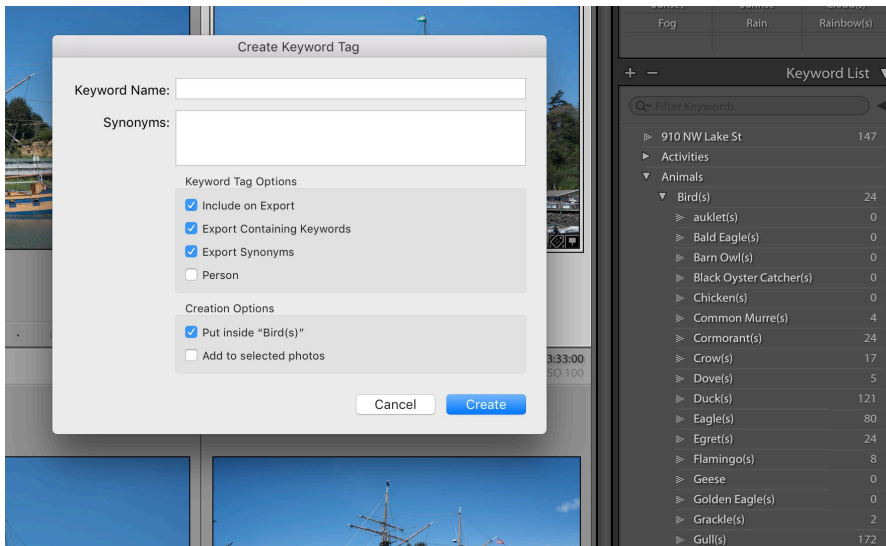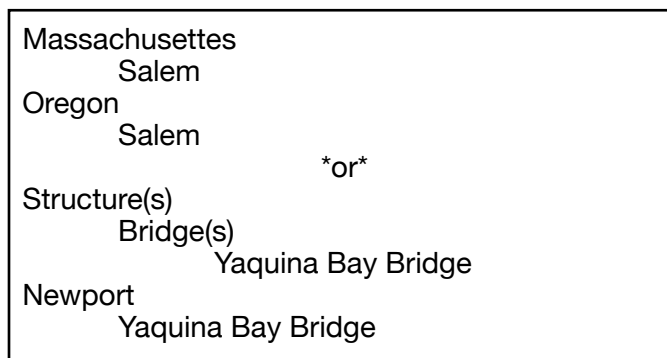

Fig. 5A

Fig. 5B

- Once you have found the keyword you want go to the far left of its entry and a small box will appear under the cursor (Fig. 4). Click on that box and a check will appear next to the keyword indicating it has been added to the image(s). The number to the right indicated how many images of the given scope have that keyword applied (Fig. 3).

- To remove a keyword from an image, click on the checkmark to the left, and the checkmark will disappear and the keyword will be removed from the image(s) (Fig. 4).

- Editing, deleting and changing the status of keywords is done in the Keyword List Section. To edit, delete or change the status of a keyword, right click on the keyword in the list. A menu will appear that will allow you to perform several actions, including editing and deleting the keyword (Fig. 5A). If you select edit, a dialog box will appear where you can change the name, add synonyms and change the visibility of the keyword (Fig. 5B).

- Creating Hierarchal Keyword Lists.

- Hierarchal Keyword Lists may be imported from a text file formatted in the proper way or be created in the "Keyword List" Panel. There are two ways to create a hierarchal list in the "Keyword List" Panel, the first is simply drag the keyword that you wish to subordinate to another keyword to that keyword. Fore example to

subordinate the keyword "Duck" to "Bird", drag the keyword "Duck" to the keyword "Bird" and the keyword "Duck" will disappear. Clicking on the triangle next to the word "Bird" will show the word "Duck" nested beneath it. The Alternative is to right click on the higher order keyword and choose the option "Create Keyword Tag inside …" This will bring up a dialog box where you can create the new keyword, and optionally synonyms and export visibility (Fig. 5B).

- Hierarchal Keywords can include multiple instances of the same keyword, and both may be assigned to the same image:

```
Massachusettes
        Salem
Oregon
        Salem
                        *or*
Structure(s)
        Bridge(s)
                Yaquina Bay Bridge
Newport
        Yaquina Bay Bridge
```

- Assigning keywords using the "Spray Can" in Grid View in the lower panel.

  - The spray can is found on the bottom section of the grid view just above the filmstrip (Fig. 1). This is a general purpose device to assign attributes to images including keywords. To use this device, click on the spray can. To the right it will say "Paint:" and there will be a dropdown menu. If it doesn't say Keywords, change it to that setting. Further to the right there will be a box where you can enter one or more keywords.

  - Once you have entered the keywords you wish to use, hold the can over the image you wish to apply them to and click the left key of the mouse. It will assign the keywords to that image. If you hold the left mouse key down and drag the can over multiple image, it will assign the keywords to all of the images you moused over while the left mouse key was pressed.

  - If you make a mistake, you can remove the keyword(s) by holding down the "Alt" key and left clicking the image.

- The "Spray Can" works best when you have keywords that are scattered through a bunch of images that would be difficult to select use Cmd(Ctrl)- and Shift-Click.

Search for Images using Keywords

- Scope of Search

  - Now that you have gone to all the trouble to add keywords, the next step is to use them to find the images you want. It is important to understand the scope of your search. It will depend on what you have selected on the left hand panel. To get the most inclusive search, go to "Catalog" and choose "All Photographs". Remember too, that the scope of "Text" searches as described below will be affected by the status of the "Show Photos in Subdirectories" setting under the "Library" Menu option. For texts searches that include subdirectories when using a folder as the scope of the search, be sure this is checked if you wish the subdirectories searched. This is not an issue if you use the "Catalog>All Photographs" option.

  - All searches are done in the Grid mode of the Library module.

- Using the "Text" Search

  - At the top of the Grid Pane there is a bar which say "Library Filter:" to the left, "Text|Attribute|Metadata|None" in the middle and Filter Off and a lock symbol to the right (Fig. 6).
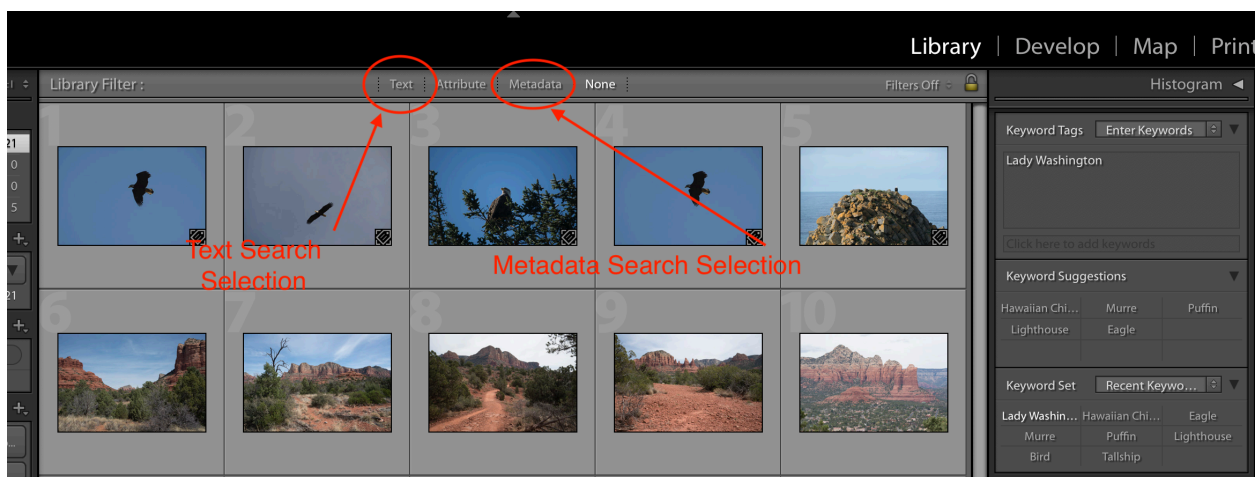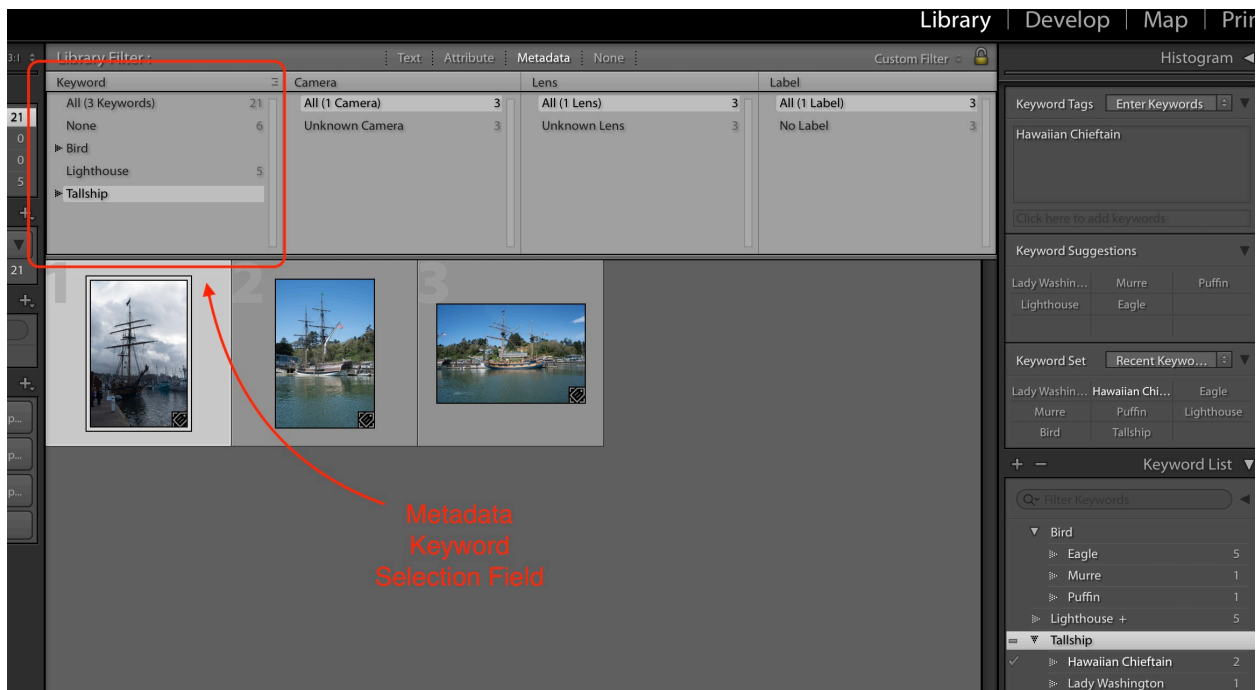

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

- To conduct a text search of your images for a keyword using the "Text" filter, select "Text" and to the right select "Keywords" or "Any Searchable Field", and the desired modifier which defaults to "Contains All" and then enter the desired keyword text. Lightroom will then go through the images and return any matching results. Be aware that if for example you entered the text "creek", keywords like "Deer Creek", "Smith Creek" and "creek" would all be returned.

- Using the "Metadata" Search

  - To use the "Metadata" Filter, Choose "Metadata" from the central group of filters at the top of the view (Fig. 6). A series of boxes will appear at the top of the grid view, and there may or may not be any images showing. Each of the boxes will have a heading which is a searchable category of metadata. Make sure one says "Keyword". The others are unimportant as long as they say "All" (Fig. 7).

  - Navigate through the keyword list until you find the keyword you are interested in and select it. The appropriate images will be displayed in the Grid View.

  - To use an additional keyword, use the next box to the right and set it to keyword as well. They act from left to right, so the next keyword search will only act on the images that passed the keyword search to the left.

- Using the "Keyword List"

  - Go to the "Keyword List" on the right panel and choose the keyword you are interested in. Hover over the far right, past the number and an arrow will appear

11

(Fig. 4). Click on that arrow, and "Metadata" search on the keyword will occur just as describe in the '"Metadata" Search' described above.

- Finding Unkeyworded Images. To find images for which no keywords have been assigned, go to the "Collections" section on the left hand panel and expand "Smart Collections." The last Smart Collection is titled "Without Keywords," and double clicking on that will show all of the images that have no keywords assigned to them.

  • *Tip: If you have images that you do not wish to keyword, but don't want to be included in the Smart Collection "Without Keywords," create a keyword like "No Keyword" and set it so it will not export. Then you can assign this keyword to images that you don't want to keyword and they wont show up because they actually have a keyword.*

Final Thoughts

To make keywording useful, you need both a meaningful keywording strategy and to faithfully apply keywords to your images. I would recommend that you sit down and do the keywording as one of the first things after downloading your images. Letting slide for days or weeks or months only makes the task more daunting when you finally get around to it. If you are going to rely on keywording to find your images, it is important that you keep after it.

- *Tip: If you don't have the time to do complete keywording of a set of images, do the keywording that you know you will need to find the image again. Create a keyword like "incomplete keywording", set it so it won't export, and assign it to all images that you wish to come back and do additional keywording on. At a later date, a metadata keyword search on "incomplete keywording" will produce all of the images that need more keywording, and you can finish the job. Remember to remove the "incomplete kewording" keyword when you are done.*