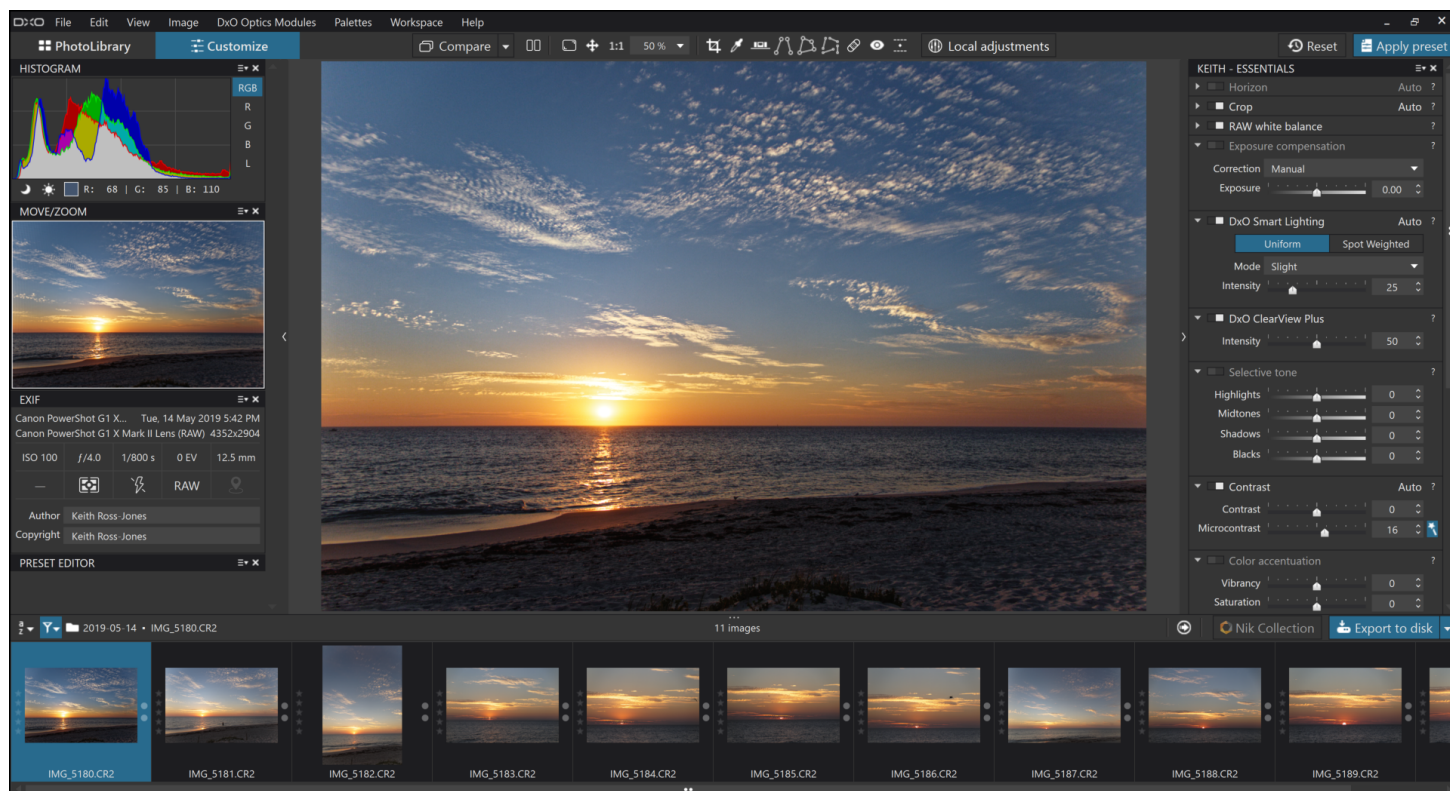


DxO PhotoLab



What is DxO PhotoLab

DxO PhotoLab is an advanced photo editing software package with a primary focus on RAW photo processing. After having used Lightroom from version 1 through 6, we refused to move to Adobe's subscription service. We then started trialing many packages looking for a good replacement for Lightroom. Our criteria was ease of use with good lens correction. We initially chose ACDSee Photo Studio Ultimate but found the RAW conversion a little slow for our travel laptops. The search continued and we settled on DxO PhotoLab.

DxO PhotoLab does not provide any real Digital Asset Management features beyond creating simple Projects which are named collections of photos. To provide this function, DxO PhotoLab uses a simple database which stores metadata about images included in the database.

DxO PhotoLab comes in two versions, Essential Edition and Elite Edition. We recommend the Elite Edition for the following features, among others:

- Local Adjustments using U-Point technology
- The best optical corrections available
- Prime Denoise (RAW only)
- DxO Clearview Plus

- Customisable Tool Palettes
- Multiple Exports
- Preset Editor

For a full list of differences visit their web page [here](#).

Notable Features

Customisable Palettes

DxO Photolab Elite Edition allows you to create customised tool palettes. This is extremely useful because you can arrange these palettes, and the tools contained therein, to exactly fit your workflow. We have a standard routine that we mostly follow when developing our photos and so have arranged the tools in our personalised palette to reflect this. Customised palettes can be saved and you can save different layouts for different workflows if required.

Optical Corrections

The optical corrections facility is based on scientifically analysed lens and camera characteristics, which are automatically applied to your photos. Profiles for more than 42,000 lens and camera combinations are used to correct photos by correcting distortion, vignetting, chromatic aberrations, and sharpness. Your photo's EXIF data is used to identify which camera/lens profile to download and apply. If a profile does not exist then you can make manual corrections as required.

Clearview Plus

Clearview Plus is a function that can cut through haze and make images 'pop'. This function is extremely useful and effective to make quick and sometimes major changes to your images with a single slider. You do need to be careful with this tool as the default value is often too intense and needs to be reduced using the Intensity slider.

Prime Denoise

Prime Denoise is probably the best denoise function I have used but only works on RAW files. Prime Denoise is very compute intensive so you will only see the effect on the whole photo once you export it. You can see the effect in the tool's preview window which shows just a small portion of the photo.

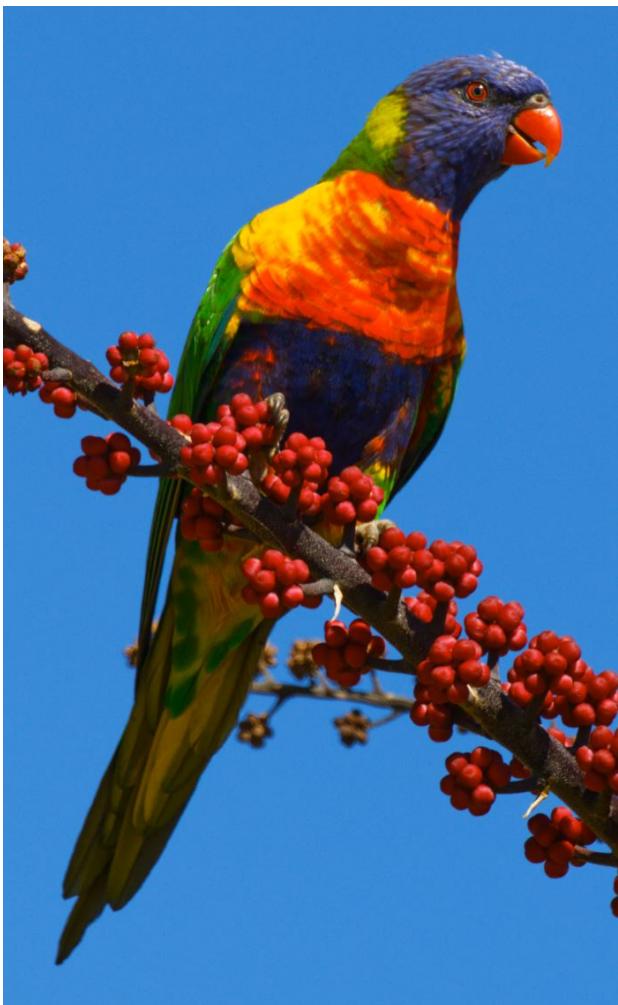
Local Adjustments

Local adjustments are extremely good and have a number of tools for

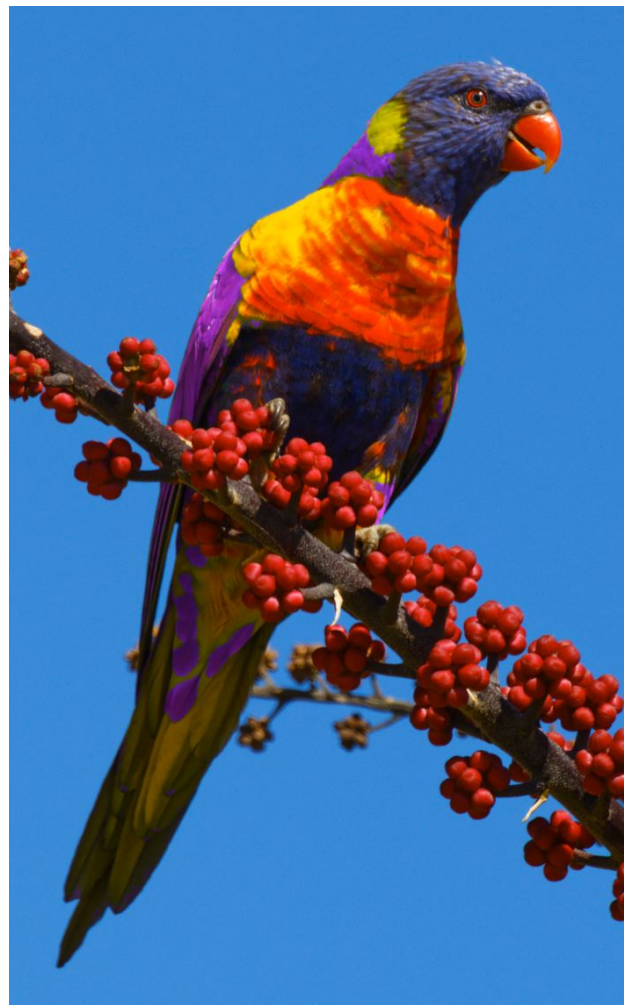
masking areas requiring adjustment. These local adjustment are internal implementations of the very popular U-Point technology from the NIK Collection of tools. The latest version has a palette that lists all local adjustments where you can manage the masks created. You can delete adjustments, invert masks and turn individual adjustments on and off to visualise their effect.

HSL Tool

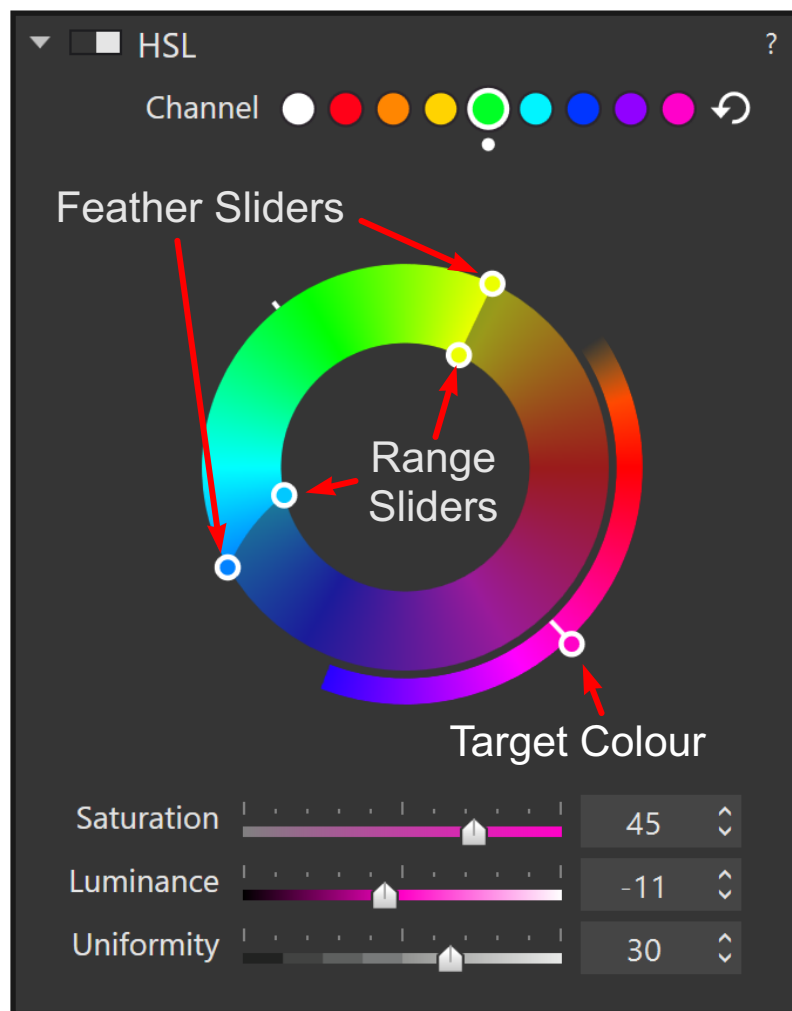
The HSL tool in version 3 has a new interface with a feature called the **Color Wheel**. This is an extremely powerful tool and makes colour adjustments very easy. The example shown below is extreme but gives you an idea of what this tool is capable of doing by changing green to purple.



Before



After



To use the tool you select the colour range you want to change using the sliders for range and feathering, then move the outer slider to select the new colour. There are three other sliders for adjusting Saturation, Luminance and Uniformity. The uniformity slider is used to smooth the shading from one tone to another and remove the 'blocky' appearance that can appear when making drastic colour changes.

Exporting

When you have done editing you normally export the photo to another format and/or location on disk. You can define multiple named export settings and then you can select one or more for your export. If you select more than one your photo will be exported multiple times in one export.

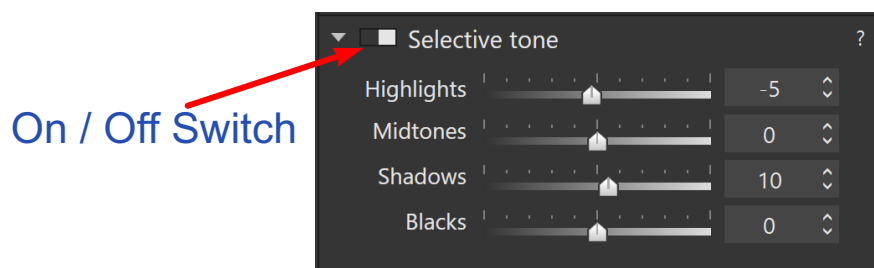
Using DxO PhotoLab

DxO PhotoLab has two modes, **PhotoLibrary** and **Customise**. In the PhotoLibrary you can browse your hard drives, index a folder, search for images, manage your photos, rate, tag and compare images. When you index a folder, image properties are stored in the database. Once properties are in the database the search function can be used to find photos quickly. The search function is unique but very easy to use.

The Customise window is the place you develop your photos. All changes made are recorded in sidecar files with an extension of **.dop**. These are standard text files so you can look at what changes have been made to the photo and also keep the develop settings with the photo when moving photos from one location to another. Unfortunately, DxO has decided not to use the standard XMP files but there are indications that this may change in the future.

DxO PhotoLab has a full set of tools for editing your photos. These tools are laid out in a number of palettes which can be configured to be a floating palette or can be docked to the left or right edge of the screen. Essentially, you can customise your workspace to suite your needs.

Each tool controls a single function which can be turned on or off using the switch on the top-left of each tool. This is extremely useful because you can get a before/after view by simply toggling this switch. You can also turn off a particular tool and it will not be applied to your photo when you export it.



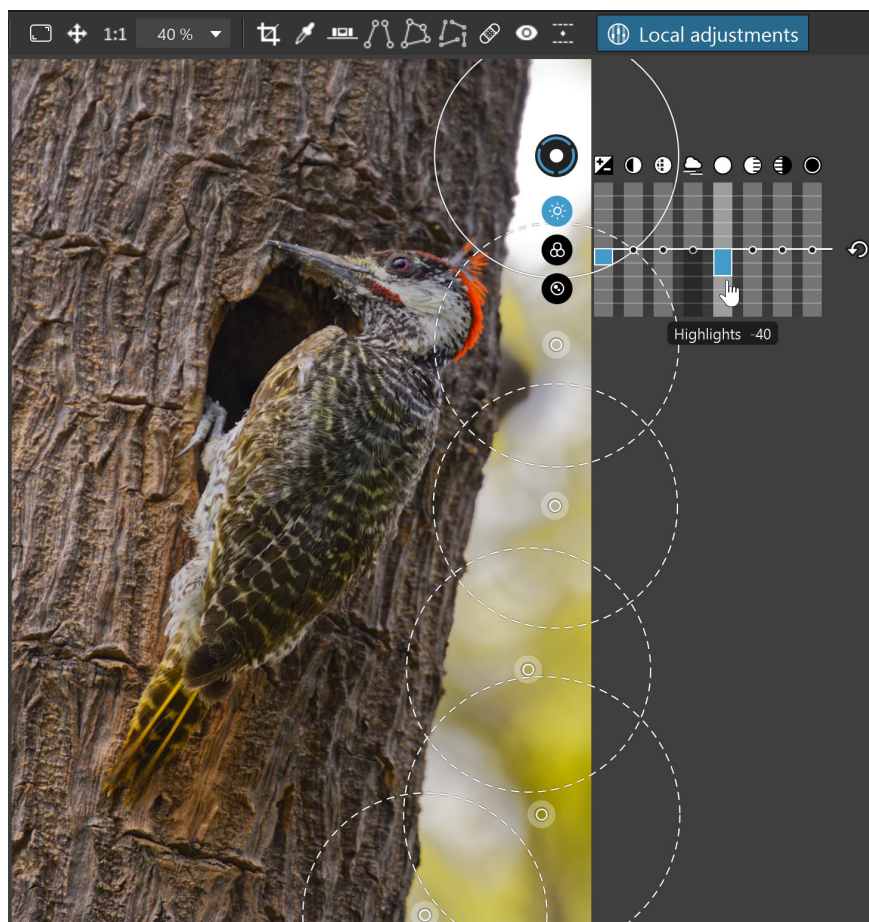
The order that these tools are applied is controlled internally and you have no control over this order. Lightroom, however, records all adjustments as they are made and may include multiple changes to individual tools. I prefer DxO PhotoLab's method as you can turn off any individual adjustment to see its effect while keeping other adjustments visible.

Local Adjustments

Local Adjustments, as the name suggests, is a set of tools allowing you to make adjustments (edits) to selected portions of your photo. These tools came from the very popular set of tools called the NIK Collection. The NIK Collection is still available as plugins for other software such as PhotoShop and Lightroom. These tools are very easy to use and consist of Brush, Graduated Filter, Control Point, Auto Mask and Eraser.

Control Points and Auto Mask are the most interesting. Control Points allow you to put a point on your photo to sample the colour and lightness in the immediate area of the point. You then adjust a larger circle to indicate the area you want to operate on. You can add additional points which will all act together. Finally you make your adjustments and they are applied to the

colour and lightness of the region covered by the control point radius. The example below shows how you can tone down the bright background which is a little distracting.



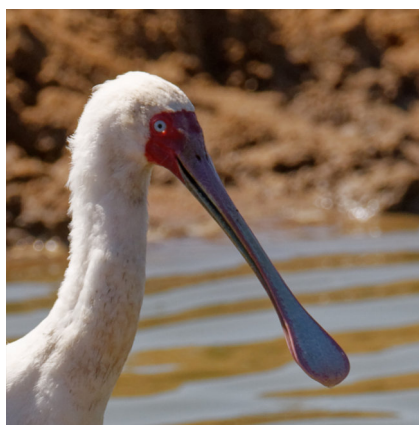
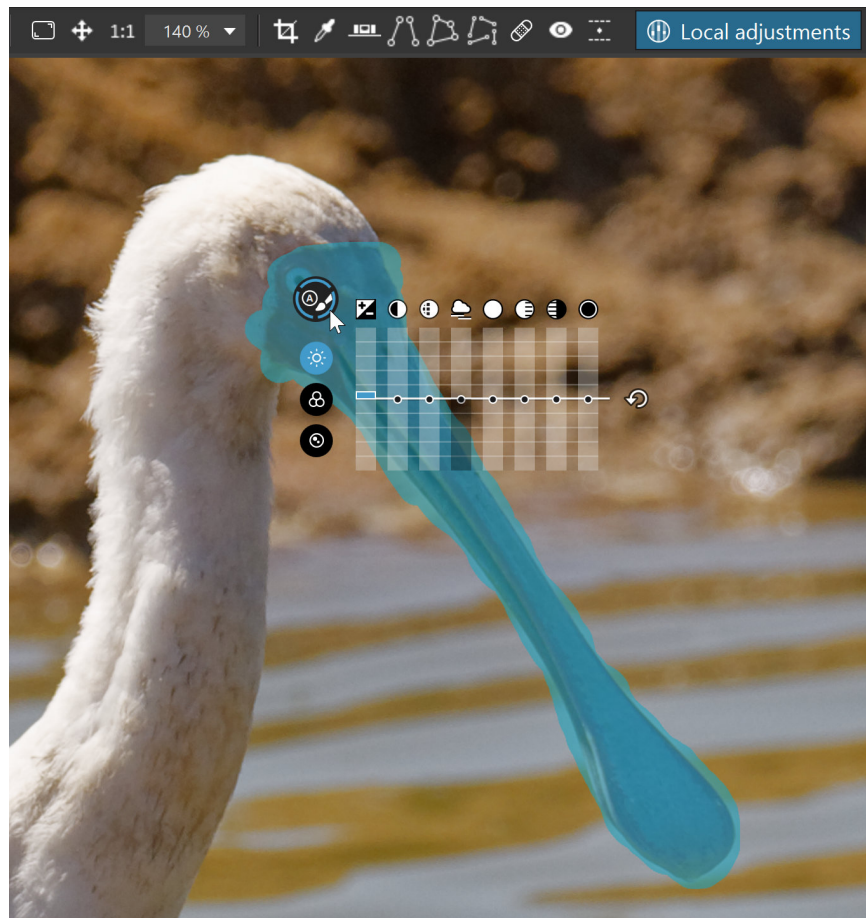
Before



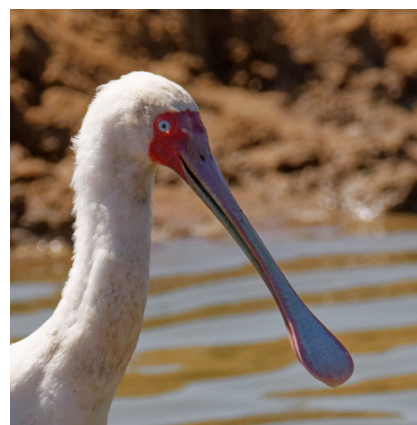
After

Auto Mask allows you to draw a mask but uses edge detection to limit the mask to the subject's outline. This is most useful if your subject has a distinct edge separating it from the background. The tool shows an inner circle which samples the colour and lightness of the subject being masked. An outer circle defines the area where edge detection occurs. The object is to keep the inner

circle within your subject's outline and at the same time make sure the outer circle covers an area outside the subject's outline. The mask will then only operate on the subject within its outline. Once you have defined the mask you can make your adjustments. The example below shows a subtle adjustment but you can achieve stronger affects where required.



Before



After

Conclusion

DxO PhotoLab is a very efficient and very capable RAW photo editor with many advanced features that enable you to develop photos and make local adjustments without the need for other photo editing software such as PhotoShop. DxO PhotoLab has a very customisable interface allowing you to create a layout that fits with your workflow. Prime Noise reduction does an incredible job but is very compute intensive although the effort is well worth it.

DxO PhotoLab includes some Digital Asset Management features where you can index folders and then search metadata to locate your photos. The search function is very smart and provides a simple yet powerful search facility. The latest update to DxO PhotoLab now includes the ability to add and modify keywords.

There are lots of video tutorials and online webinars on how to use DxO PhotoLab. All videos and recording of webinars can be found on [DxO's Home Page](#) under **Learn & Support** and also on [DxO's YouTube channel](#).

Finally, we are very happy with this software for its superb image quality. We believe DxO Photolab has the best lens correction function along with outstanding local adjustment tools which are easy to use and produce great results without resorting to heavyweight editing software. Unlike Adobe software, there is no subscription service so you make a one-off purchase and then pay for upgrades. DxO PhotoLab is very actively supported and developed with a number of recent upgrades providing many improvements and many very useful new features.