

LIGHT & PROCESS:

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography and Post-Processing from Start to Finish

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Chapter 5

BLUE ADVENTURE

While I lived in the Pacific Northwest, the waterfalls along the Columbia River Gorge and throughout the entire region were great spots to bring a camera. For the most part, they were easy to find and fairly well documented, so when approaching one I usually had a good idea of what to expect. The best part about photographing waterfalls is not the waterfalls themselves, however, but rather the miscellaneous details of rocks, water, and other compositions you get to search for while there.

This image was photographed near Steep Creek Falls in Washington. The waterfall was an easy find, just off of the road, but that also made the waterfall difficult to photograph. A lot of tree branches were in the way, and the fact that I had to stand on the roadway to get the shot meant that angles were somewhat limited. I did my best to photograph the waterfall, but quickly moved on to scout out other things in the area.

On the other side of the road was a flat area of land that sat next to a stream fed by the waterfall. It was here that I knew I would find my photograph. Dozens of bright-green mossy rocks were peeking out of the crystal-blue water, so I made myself at home here until I found a good composition and went with it.



A behind-the-scenes look at my gear and setup.
Photographed with an iPhone

Searching for a beautiful scene to photograph is exciting, like a treasure hunt! In some ways it reminds me of being a kid on a bicycle exploring the neighborhood. It’s the little surprises that make the trips enjoyable. Photographing the obvious can sometimes be boring, and I like a bit of adventure and mystery when I approach a scene with my camera.

Photography & Setup

Camera Gear & Equipment

- **Camera:** Canon 5D Mark III
- **Lens:** Canon 70-200mm f/4L IS
- **Tripod Gear:**
 - » Really Right Stuff TVC 24L Tripod
 - » Really Right Stuff BH-40 Ballhead
 - » Really Right Stuff B5D3-L L-Plate
- **Accessories:**
 - » Canon GPS GP-E2
 - » Canon RS-80N3 Remove Switch (cable release)
 - » Lee Filters Foundation Kit
 - » Lee Filters Big Stopper (10-stop ND filter)
 - » NDTimer (iPhone app)

Exposure Settings

- **Date and Time:** March 17, 2013
- **GPS Coordinates:** 45°44’53” N 121°58’55” W
- **Exposure Mode:** Bulb
- **Aperture:** f/11
- **Shutter Speed:** 171 sec
- **ISO:** 100
- **Focal Length:** 70mm

Concept & Photography

When photographing waterfalls and running water, one thing I know for sure is that I will be using an ND filter. These filters decrease the amount of light coming in through the lens and also come in different levels of “stops.” This means that a 3-stop ND filter will increase your exposure time by three stops, a 6-stop ND filter will increase by six stops, and so on. I currently have three ND filters in my inventory: a 3-stop, a 6-stop, and a 10-stop (named the Big Stopper).

When I set up my shot, I don’t always know which filter to use, so I have to do a little bit of testing and use some experiences from other outings to decide what to try (**A** and **B**). I usually know that I want my exposure to be somewhere in the one- to three-minute range, because that will give me that “cotton-candy” look in the water that I love so much. The sunlight in this location was bright enough that I knew I would need to cut out a lot of the light, even on an overcast day, and so I ended up going with a 10-stop ND filter, which ultimately allowed my shutter to be open for 171 seconds for the main shot (2 minutes 51 seconds).

Next, I needed to find a good composition in this location. When I’m on the hunt for the spot I want to photograph, my lens will often help do the searching for me. For this location I decided to go with a longer lens, the 70–200mm. A wide lens, such as a 24mm (one of my other common lens choices) was just too wide for this scene. I wanted to focus in closer on the details so I opted for the longer zoom. Then, once I had my camera set up and ready to go, I used Live View on my camera to view my scenes. Moving the camera around and looking at the LCD screen with Live View turned on helps me see the scene a little differently and can really help frame my shot, especially when using a longer focal length.

Once I found the spot I wanted to photograph, I tried a few compositions to see what would work best. I started out by standing a little further back from the scene to get a lot of the details and more of the background in the frame. I quickly learned that this was not going to work, because



The top image (A) was my test exposure, and the bottom image (B) is the longer exposure created using a neutral density filter. Notice how differently the water looks in each photograph. 1/6 second (A) and 171 seconds (B); f/11 at ISO 100 (Both Images)



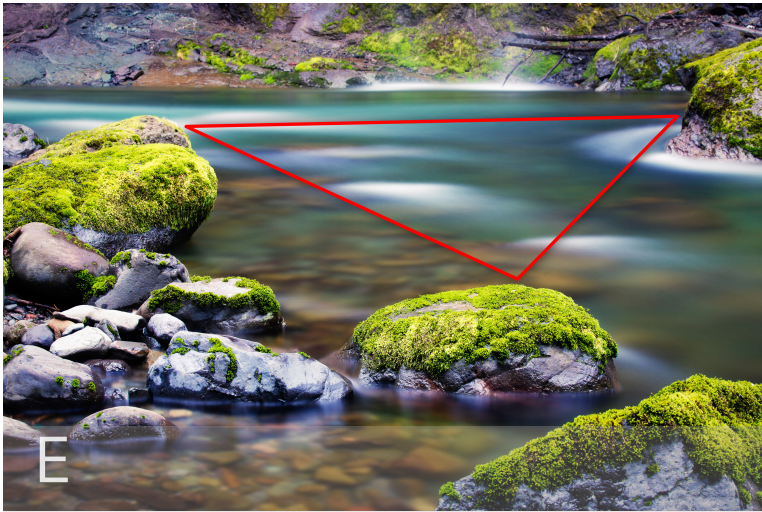


There were sticks showing in one of my earlier compositions (C), and I didn't like the way that the two rocks in the foreground were overlapping in the frame (D).

there were just too many random twigs and sticks in my frame (C). So, I moved in closer and composed a little bit differently, but when reviewing the shot I realized that I didn't like the way the two rocks on the bottom right were "touching," and also that there was nothing to balance the frame in the upper-right corner (D). So, I repositioned myself, added space between the two rocks on the bottom right and fit another mossy rock into the upper-right corner of the frame.

For scenes like these, I'm usually looking for a nice balance of rocks, one in the foreground as well as something of interest in the background, and I find the balance by looking for "triangles" in

my scene. These are not so much actual triangle *shapes*, but rather are items in the scene that, if you were to draw lines in a connect-the-dots fashion, would create a triangle (E). Balancing your composition this way can help keep the eyes in the scene and prevents them from wandering off of the frame. It's not always necessary, but for some compositions it can help extremely and keep the entire photograph in balance.



Creating triangles within your frame makes for a pleasing composition.

Quick Tip

CALCULATING A LONG EXPOSURE



The NDTimer app on an iPhone



The ND Calc app on Android

When using ND filters, you can't get away from doing a little bit of math to figure out what your exposure will be. Cameras cannot calculate exposure beyond 30 seconds, so you need to find other ways to figure out the time for longer exposures.

For the examples in this eBook, I used the NDTimer app with my iPhone to calculate my long exposures (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ndtimer/id390568001?mt=8>). If you use a device for Android™, try ND Calc (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.briandorey.ndcalc&hl=en>). The main difference between the two apps is that NDTimer allows you to stack filters on top of each other, while ND Calc offers a calculation based off one filter only.

Workflow & Processing

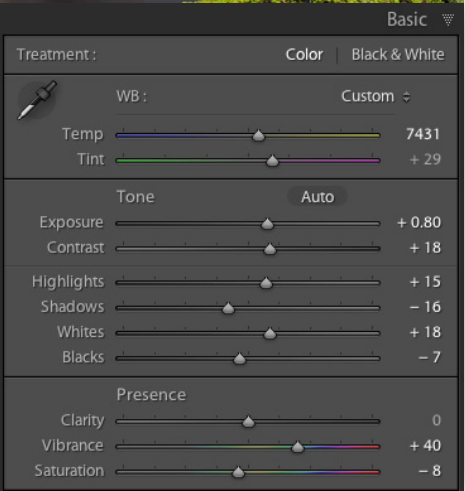
This photograph came out of the camera very clean, especially for a very long exposure, but I still want to add some brightness and contrast to the tones, as well as enhance and even manipulate the colors slightly. To do this, I will use Lightroom 5 and Photoshop CC.



Step 1

With the image inside of Lightroom, I go into the Develop module to make some initial changes in the Basic panel. The colors were kind of cool, so I make a very subtle adjustment to warm up the image and then change some of the tones:

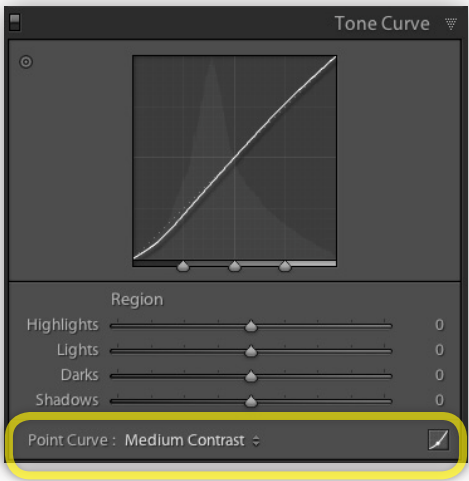
- Temperature: +7431
- Exposure: +0.80
- Contrast: +18
- Highlights: +15
- Shadows: -16
- Whites: +18
- Blacks: -7
- Vibrance: +40
- Saturation: -8





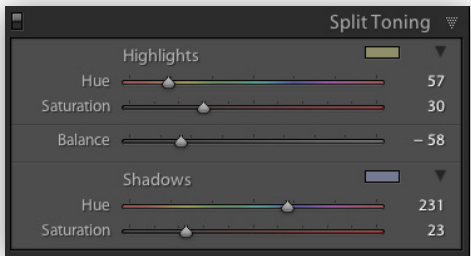
Step 2

The Tone Curve panel will help me add just a little bit more contrast. I change the **Point Curve** to Medium Contrast to add a nice “pop” to the image and deepen the blacks.



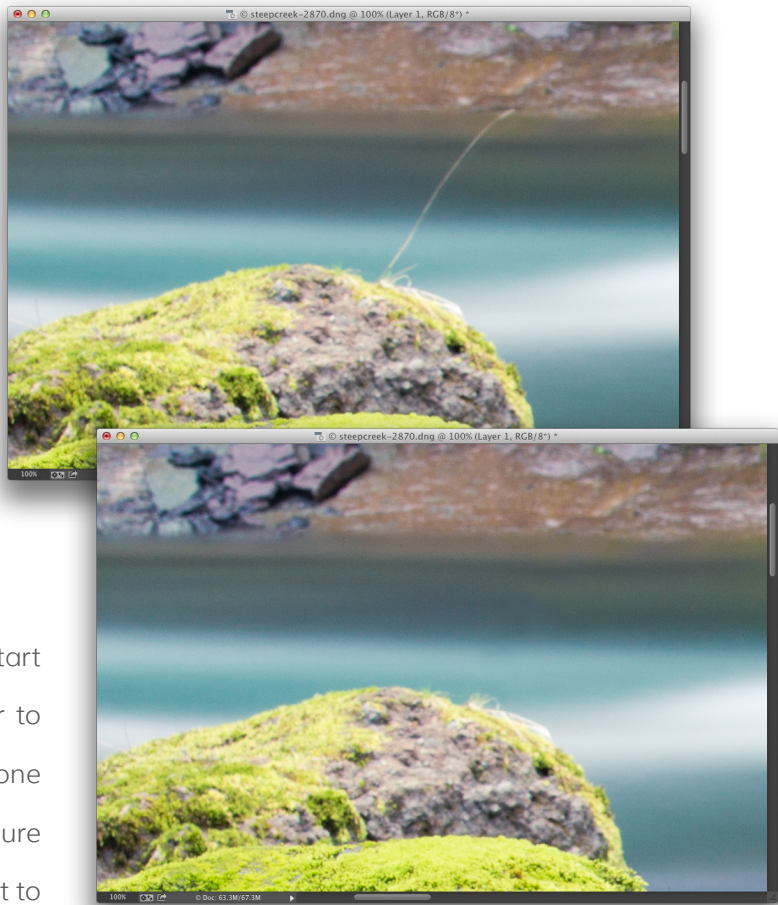
Step 3

Now I want to play with the colors using the Split Toning panel. I oftentimes loosely follow my own rule of “warm highlights and cool shadows,” and I think that will work here as well. In the Highlights section, I set **Hue** to +57 and **Saturation** to +30. Moving to the Shadows section, I set the **Hue** there to +231 and **Saturation** to +23. To push the color balance more towards the cool shadows setting I just applied, I move the **Balance** slider left to -58.

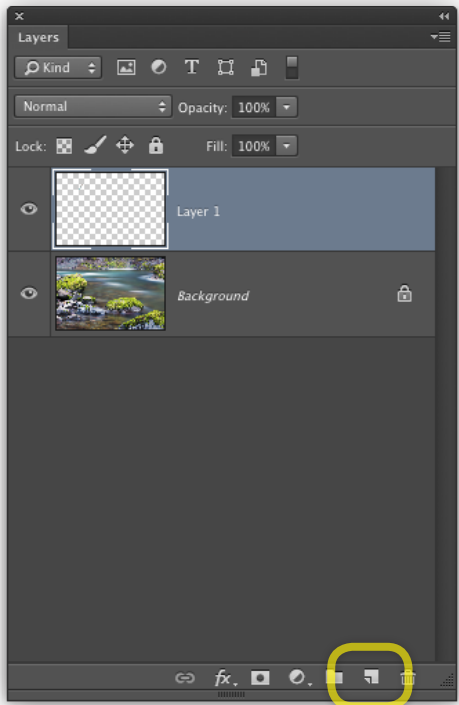


Step 4

Next I choose Photo > Edit In to open the image inside of Photoshop (Cmd+E, PC: Ctrl+E). There’s a stick in the upper-left portion of the frame that I would like to remove, and Photoshop offers some good cloning tools to clean the area up. I like working with my images in a nondestructive fashion, so before I start cloning I add a brand-new blank layer to the document. Next, I select the Clone Stamp from the Tool panel and make sure that the Sample in the Options bar is set to Current & Below.

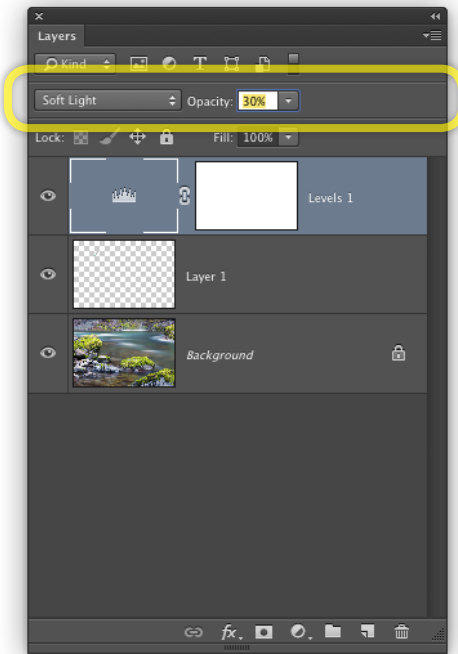


Then, I zoom in to 100% by using the keyboard shortcut Cmd+Opt+O (PC: Ctrl+Alt+O), and start cloning. I sample off to the side of the stick by Opt-clicking/Alt-clicking, and then I click the stick itself to remove it. I continue to sample from different areas to make sure that the area looks as realistic as possible. I also scan the image for sensor spots or other things that need to be removed, and clone those out as well.



Step 5

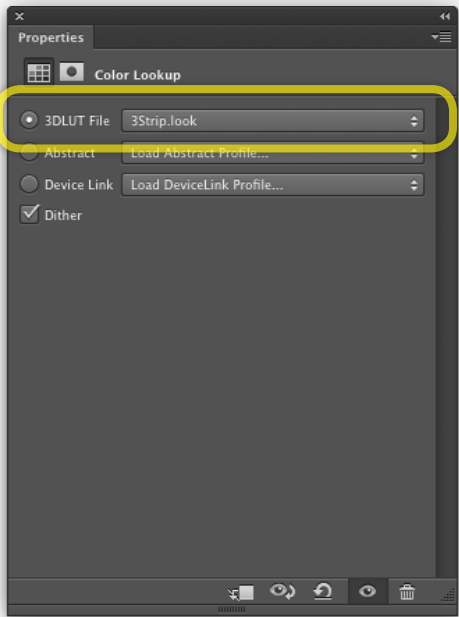
Next I add some contrast to the image by adding a Levels adjustment layer and changing its blending mode to Soft Light. I also reduced the layer’s **Opacity** to 30%. (I’m not making any actual changes to the settings of the Levels adjustment layer, just altering the blending mode and opacity.)





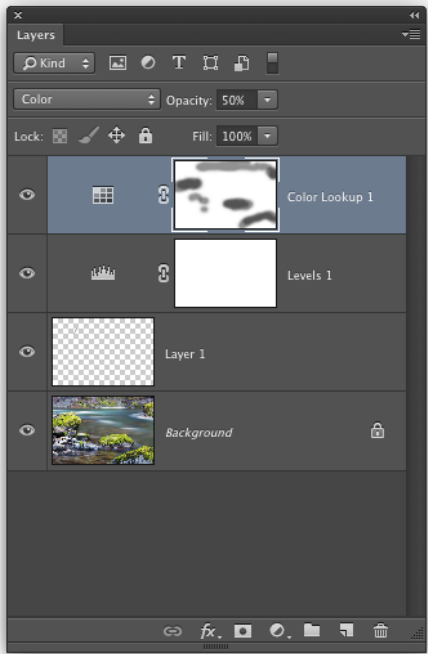
Step 6

I want to play around with more of the color in the image, so I add a Color Lookup adjustment layer. I choose 3Strip Look from the 3DUT File drop-down, which intensifies the blues in the water. Then, I change the layer’s blending mode to Color, and reduce the layer’s **Opacity** to 50%.



Step 7

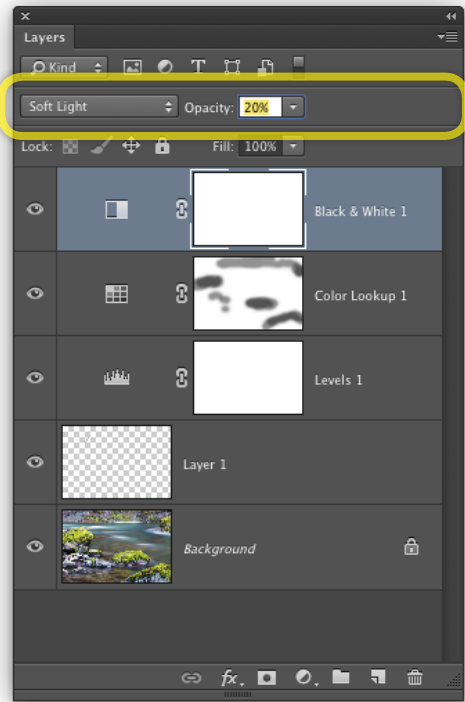
I like this effect, but not the way it is altering the color of the mossy rocks. With a little masking I can hide the effect from those areas. I make sure that the Brush tool is selected from the Tool panel, set the color to Black, change **Brush Opacity** to 50%, and paint over the mossy rocks to hide the coloring effect from the Color Look-up adjustment layer.





Step 8

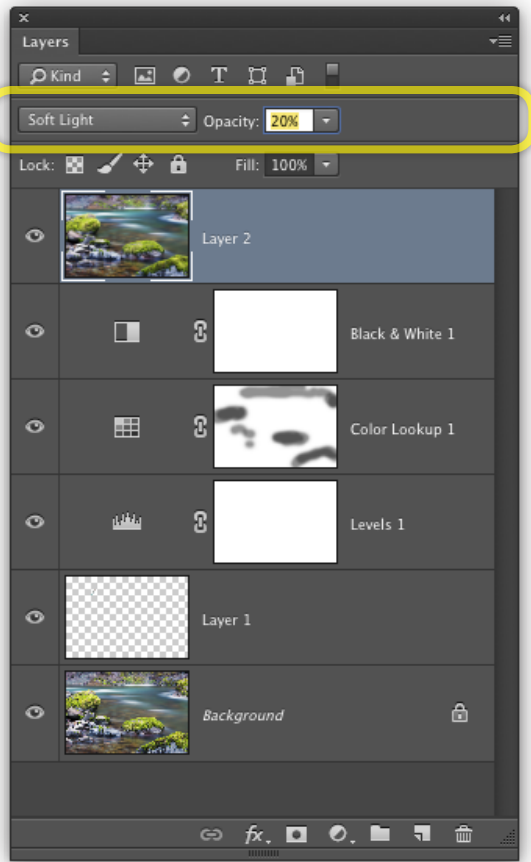
Next I add a Black & White adjustment layer to the image from the Adjustments panel, change the layer’s blending mode to Soft Light, and reduce the layer’s **Opacity** to 20%. This adds a nice, contrasty “drama” effect to the photograph.

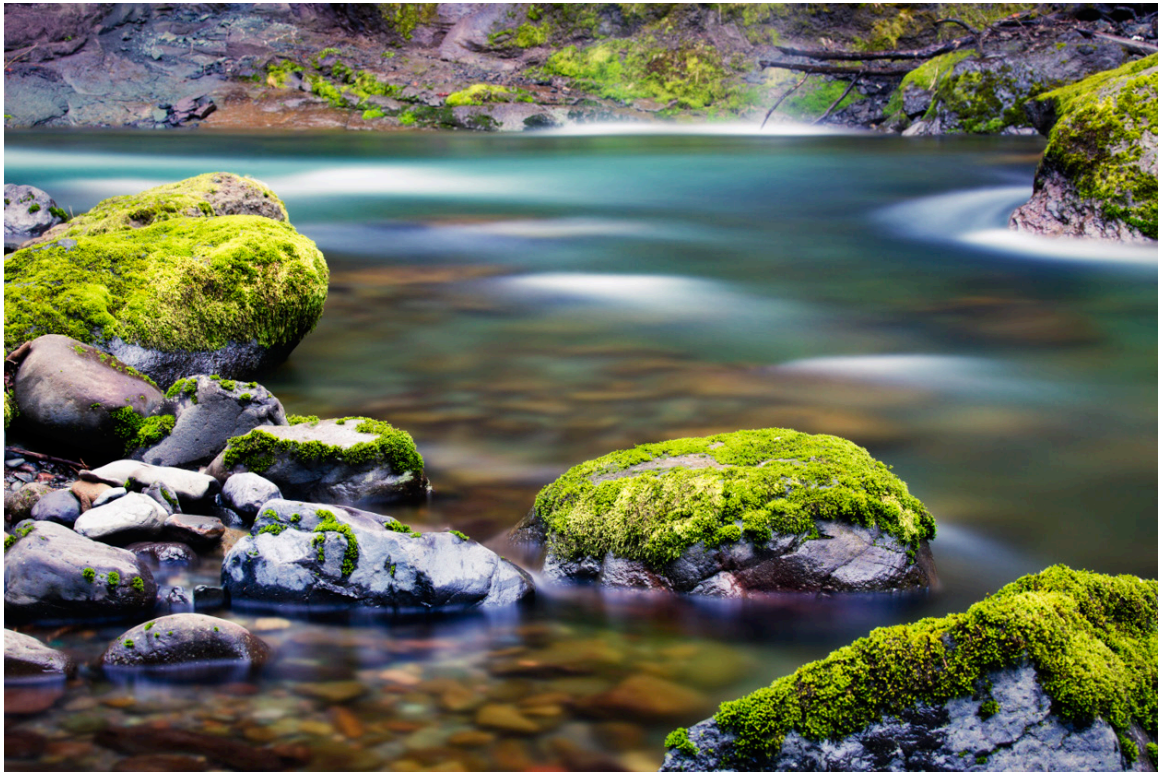
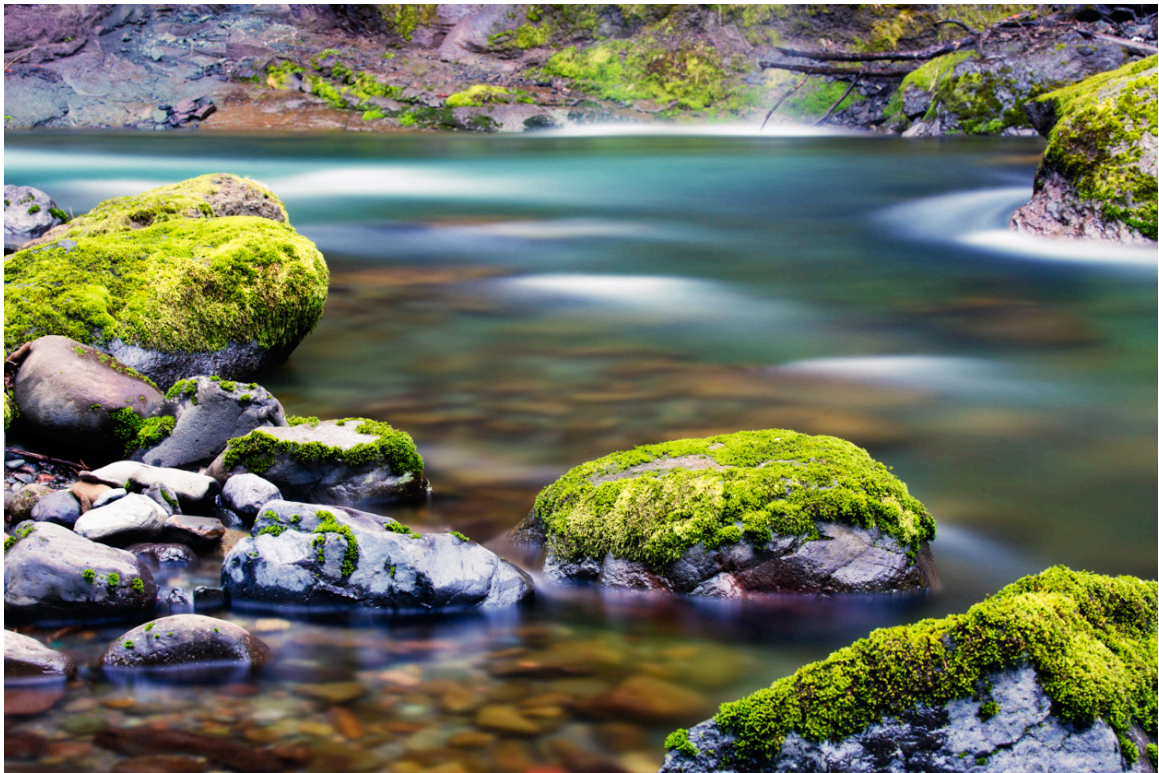


Step 9

I want to intensify the colors and contrast in the image even more, so I add a Color Pop layer. I start by making sure that the top-most layer in the Layers panel is selected, and then I use the keyboard shortcut Cmd+Opt+Shift+E (PC: Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E) to create a new merged layer of the entire image. I choose Filter > Gaussian Blur in the menu bar, set the **Radius** to 23 and change the layer’s blending mode to Soft Light. The effect is a little too intense, so I turn down **Opacity** to 20%.

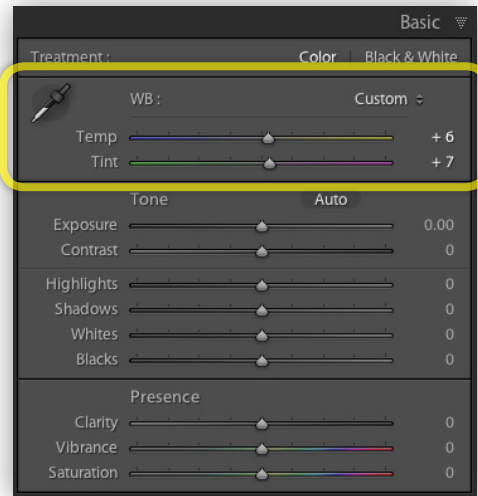
After saving the file and closing the document, I head back over to Lightroom to locate the file and make a few more changes.





Step 10

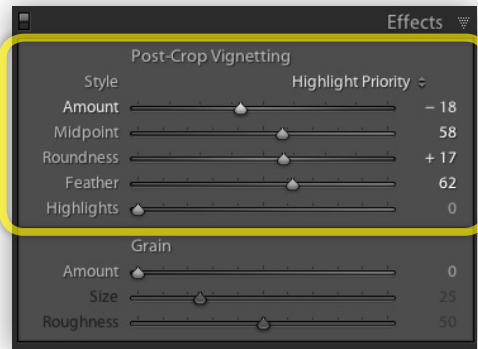
In the Basic panel of Lightroom I increase the **Temperature** to +6 and the **Tint** to +7 to fine-tune the white balance.



Finishing Touches

With the following Effect panel settings, I add a nice, subtle vignette:

- **Style:** Highlight Priority
- **Amount:** -18
- **Midpoint:** +58
- **Roundness:** +17
- **Feather:** +62

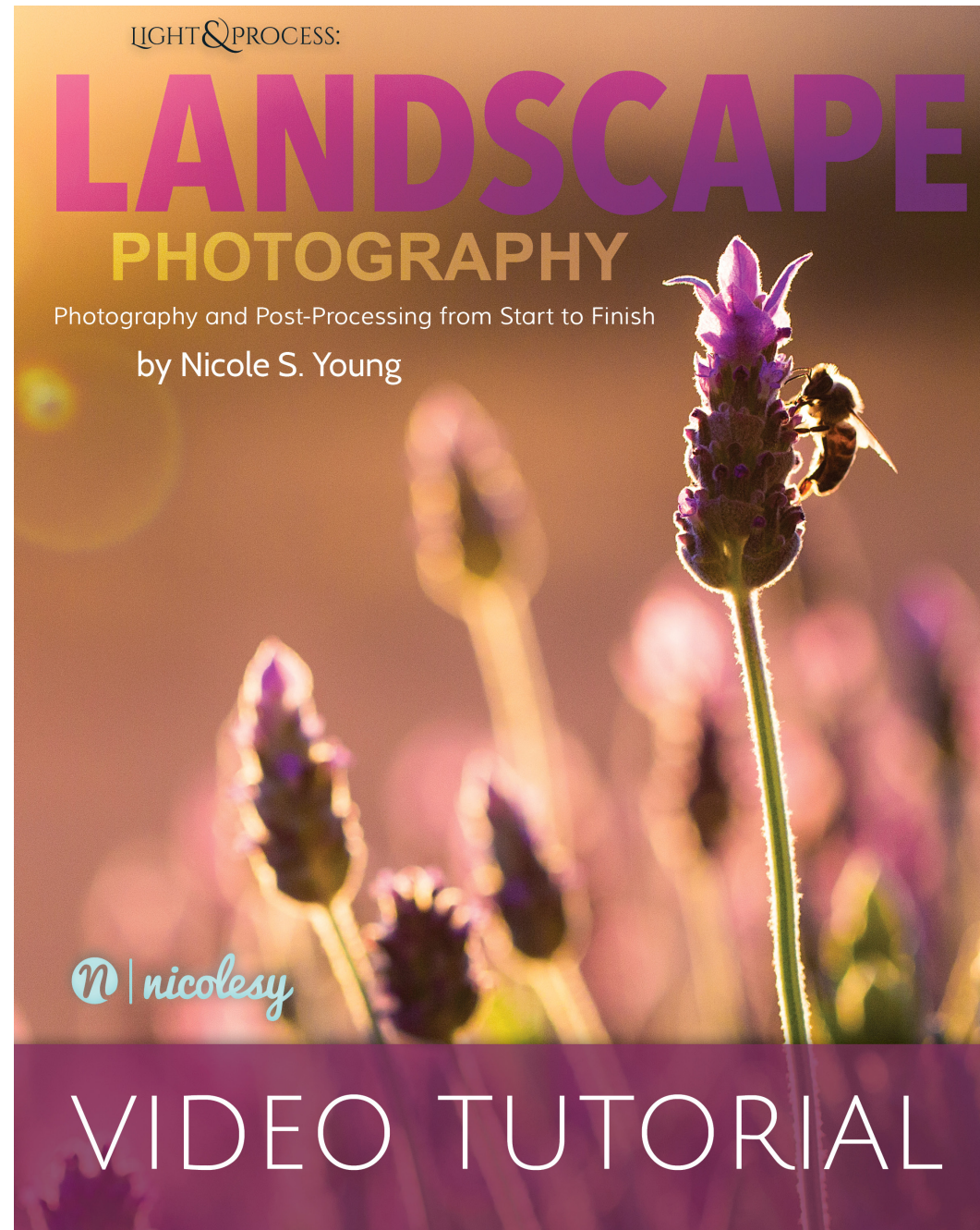
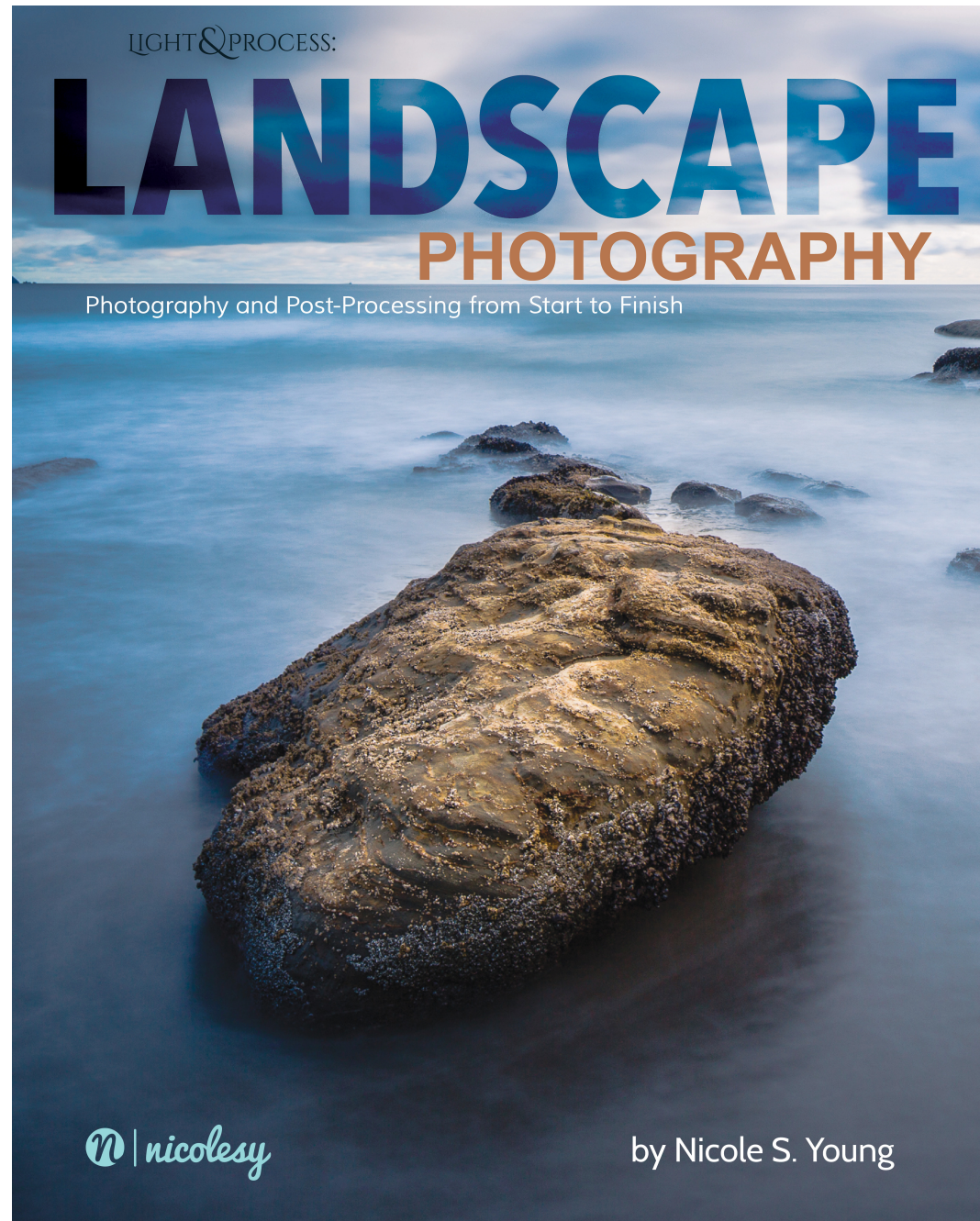




Canon 5D Mark III
Canon 70-200mm f/4L IS lens
ISO 100
171 sec at f/11

I hope you enjoyed your free sample chapter from

Light & Process: Landscape Photography



To find out more about this eBook and Video Tutorials series, please [click here](#) to go to the product page.

Here is some more information about this product:

eBook:

- **Number of Pages:** 233 pages (10 Chapters)
- **Format:** PDF
- **Published:** September 24, 2013

Tutorial:

- **Description:** 10 step-by-step processing lessons
- **Format & Length:** Video (.mov files), HD 1080p video, 2 hours 47 minutes total (02:47)

Bonus Materials:

- **Image Practice Files:** High-resolution watermarked JPEG images of each image shown in the tutorials.
- **Presets and Actions:** A set of 17 presets and actions for Lightroom 4/5, Photoshop (CS3-CC), Perfect Effects 4 and Nik Efex HDR Pro 2.

To view the video tutorial that complements this chapter, please click on the link below (Note: Internet connection required to watch this video):

<http://youtu.be/6wg8hV8dpBc>