Paul Mitchell Woodland Workshop notes

Below are a few quick tips to processing your autumn woodland images.

The techniques below relate to Lightroom

- The first thing to do is correct the exposure if needed and use the shadow and highlight sliders to correct any detail lost within these areas.

- Whilst still in the basic development panel I usually set the Texture slider to about –27. This has a pleasant 'softening' effect which is ideal for woodlands.

- Even having your camera on daylight white balance files can still look quite warm, beech tree trunks in particular can sometimes have magenta cast. The daylight white balance is usually about 5000k. I find dropping it down to 4000k corrects this warm cast. Unfortunately this then effects the yellows and oranges. I then open the HSL panel and increase the saturation of both the orange and yellow to about +50. You can also tweak the greens to taste at this stage.

- In the Effects panel I normally add a very subtle vignette, about –16. This has the effect of drawing your eye towards the centre of the image. Don't overdo the vignette!

- Sometimes woodland images may include a path with a pool of light at the far end. To try and accentuate this and even introduce a slight misty patch to create more depth to an image I do the following. Select the Radial filter. Zero all the previous settings and set the sliders to –25 Contrast and –30 Dehaze. Apply to the area you have identified.

The techniques below relate to Photoshop

- Photoshop is best used for cloning out distracting elements, paying particular attention to stray elements on the very edges of the frame.

- One of the biggest distractions in woodland images are those small white gaps in the tree canopy caused by a bright sky. One of the best methods of alleviating these distractions is as follows:

    - Create a new blank layer and set the layer blending mode to 'darken'

    - Select the cloning tool and set the opacity to 80%, making sure that the 'above and below' box is ticked.

    - On the new blank layer clone parts of the main image into those bright gaps. I find selecting an area that approximately matches the surrounding area around the gaps works well.

    - Once you have finished flatten the image.

N.B. The above only works well on small areas, it is extremely difficult to clone over large areas of sky and the final result may show cloning artefacts.

Sharpening

I use a two step sharpening process. The first does the actual sharpening the second adds a small amount of contrast. I usually apply this just before printing my images.

Step 1 – Smart sharpen. Amount 90% , Radius 0.8 and reduce noise 10%

Step 2 – Unsharp mask. Amount 50%, Radius 1 Pixel, Threshold 0

I usually set this up as an action and a second action at half the amount.

The Orton Effect

- Open your image and duplicate to create a 'background copy' layer

- Apply Gaussian blur to this copy layer. About a 25 pixel radius should be OK.

- Create a levels adjustment layer and type in a value of 13 on the far left, leave the middle box as 1 and type in 243 in the box on the right.

- Merge the background copy and levels adjustment layer and reduce the opacity to 19%

- Duplicate the main background image again and apply the 'high pass' filter (FILTER>OTHER>HIGH PASS) to this layer. About 4 pixels should be OK.

- Change the blending mode to this high pass layer to 'soft light'

- Flatten all layers and you should have a pleasantly diffused effect.

- I have recorded this as an action at various strengths, from very soft to hardly noticeable.