IMPROVE YOUR WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

NOISE REDUCTION, SHARPENING, BACKGROUND BLUR

USING LAYERS AND MASKS IN PHOTOSHOP

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Agenda

- Layers and Masks
- Sharpening
- Noise Reduction
- Blur the Background

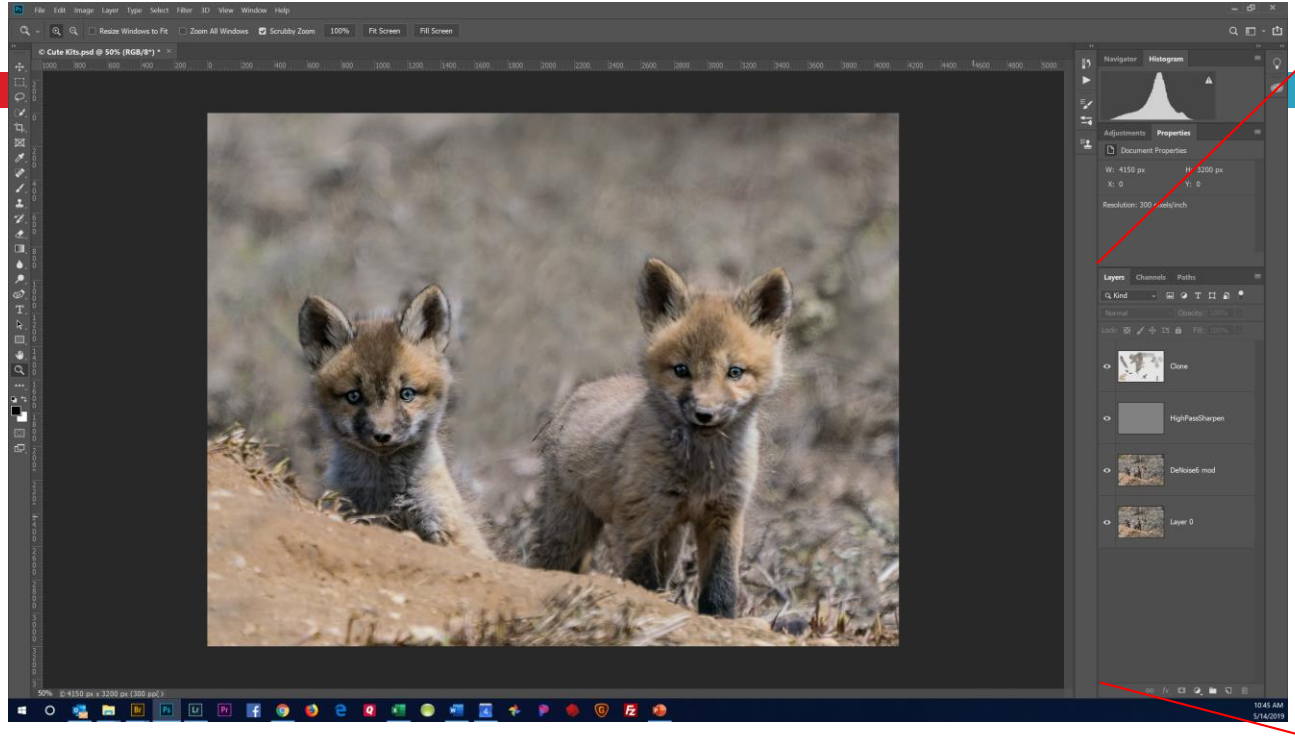
System Info

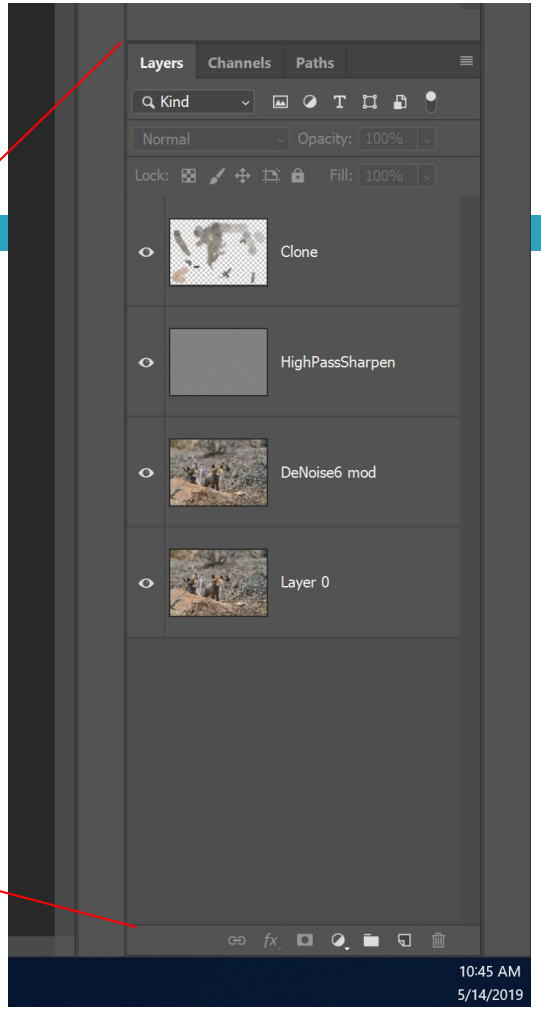
- Photoshop CC 20.02
- Bridge CC 9.02
- Lightroom Classic CC 8.2
- Plugins – Topaz DeNoise6, Topaz ReMask
- Dell XPS 13 9370, 16GB RAM, 512 GB SSD storage, Windows 10 Pro

Layers

- **Layers** are used to separate different elements of an **image.** A **layer** can be compared to a transparency on which imaging effects or images are applied and placed over a **base image.**
- **Photoshop layers** are like sheets of stacked acetate. You can see through transparent areas of a **layer** to the **layers** below.
- In PS layers are viewed top down as a stack
- Layers can be turned on and off
- Can go back and edit a previous layer
- Can edit a part of an image without effecting other parts.
- Original image is not modified

Layers

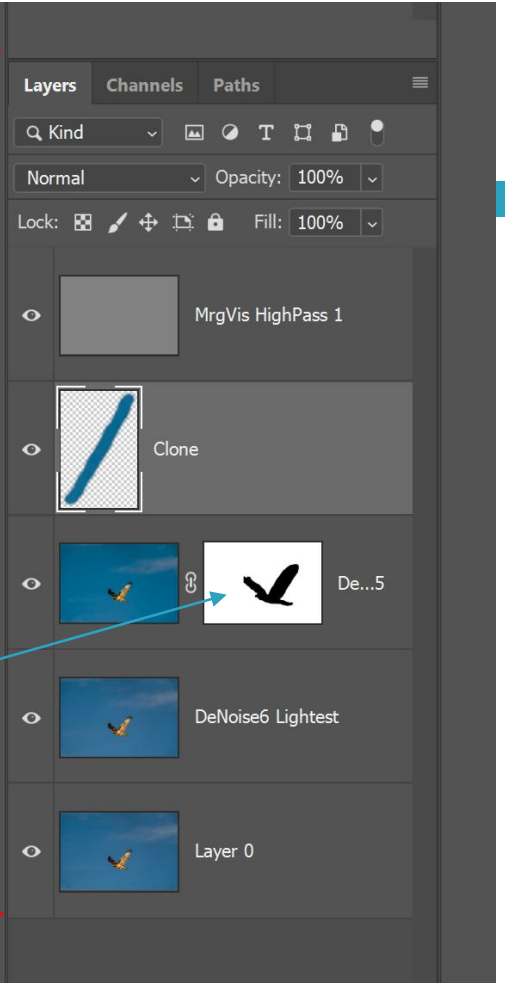



Layers
Channels
Paths
Kind
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Lock:
Fill: 100%
Clone
HighPassSharpen
DeNoise6 mod
Layer 0
10:45 AM
5/14/2019

Masks

- Layer Masks control the transparency of the layer they are “worn” by
- Make part of layer visible and part invisible
- When layer mask is completely white, then layer is completely visible
- When layer mask is completely black, then layer is completely invisible and all lower layers show through
- When layer mask has black and white areas, then black areas are transparent and image information from lower layers show through the black areas and NOT the white areas

Layer Mask



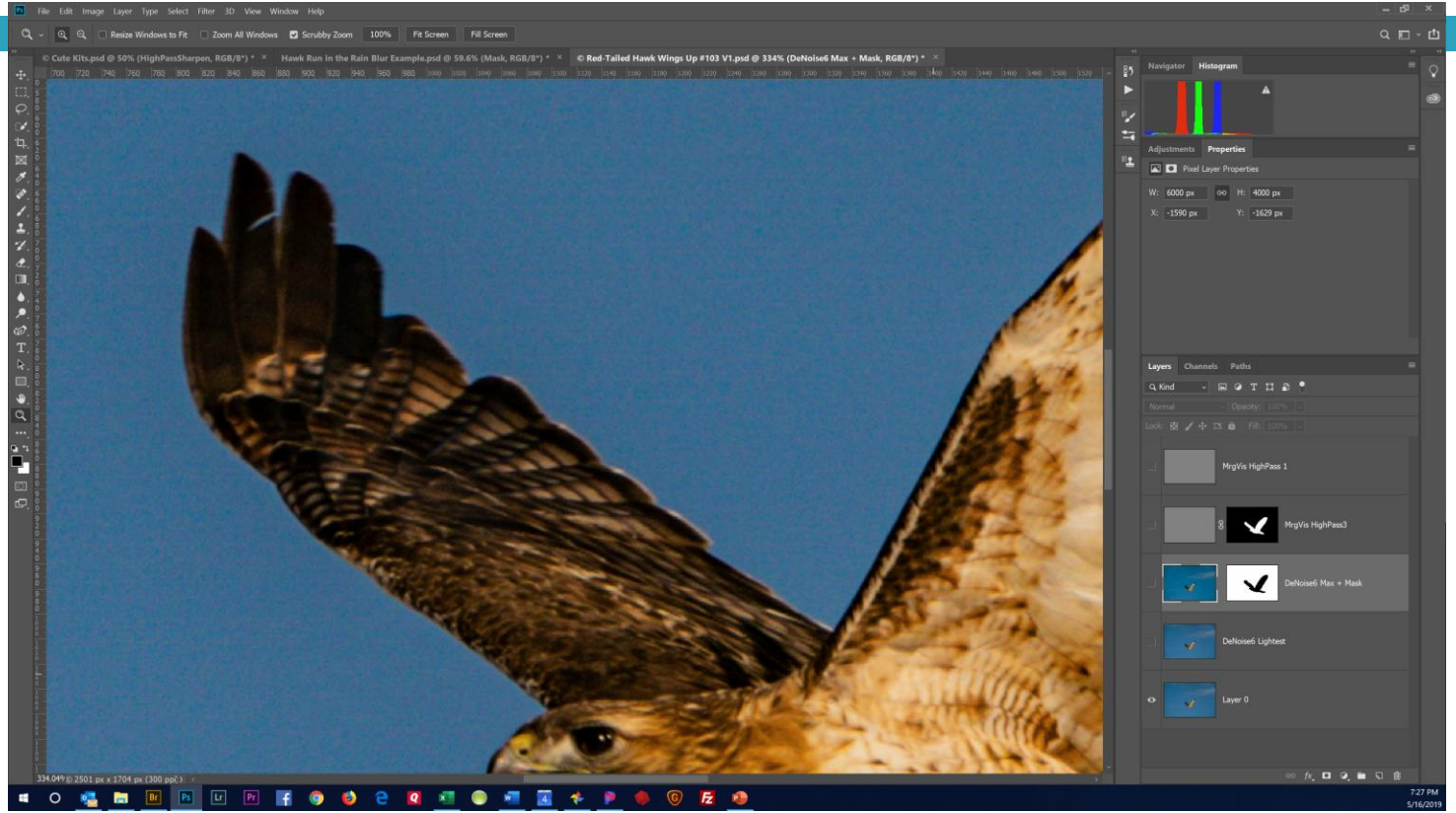
Layer Mask of Hawk

Noise Reduction Using Layer Masks

- Many Noise Reduction programs available
- Topaz DeNoise6, plug in to Photoshop highly recommended
- 2 Step Process for optimum image quality
  - Reduce noise for the wildlife as first step
    - Noise reduction is a smoothing process so need to balance reduction v. sharpness
  - Reduce noise further for the background as second step
    - On separate layer
    - Move slider for max reduction giving max smoothing
  - Create a layer mask to exclude the wildlife from the max reduction layer revealing the noise reduction for the wildlife on the layer below

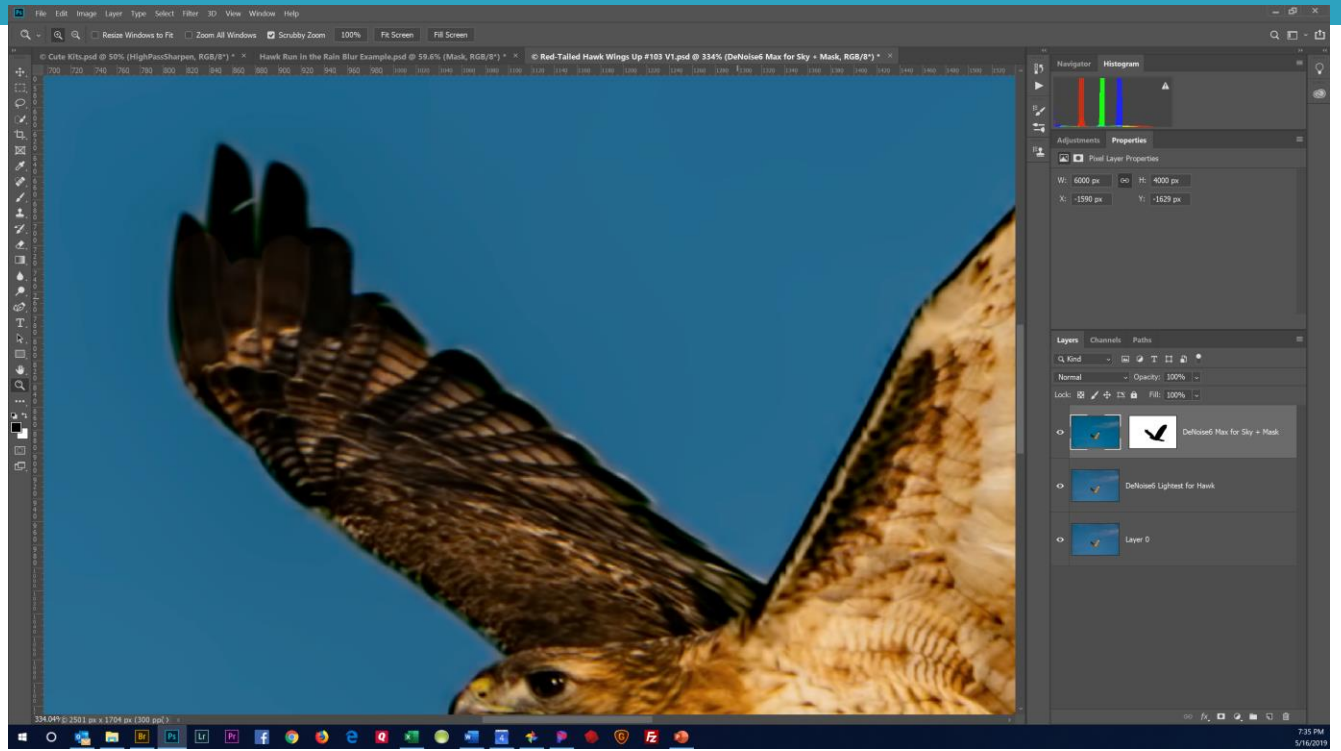
Noise Reduction Using Layer Masks

- Very noisy sky
- Not so noisy hawk
- Different levels of noise reduction is applied



Noise Reduction Using Layer Masks

- Sky and hawk are now clean of noise
- Mask created on the Max layer to allow lower layer of hawk with less reduction to show through

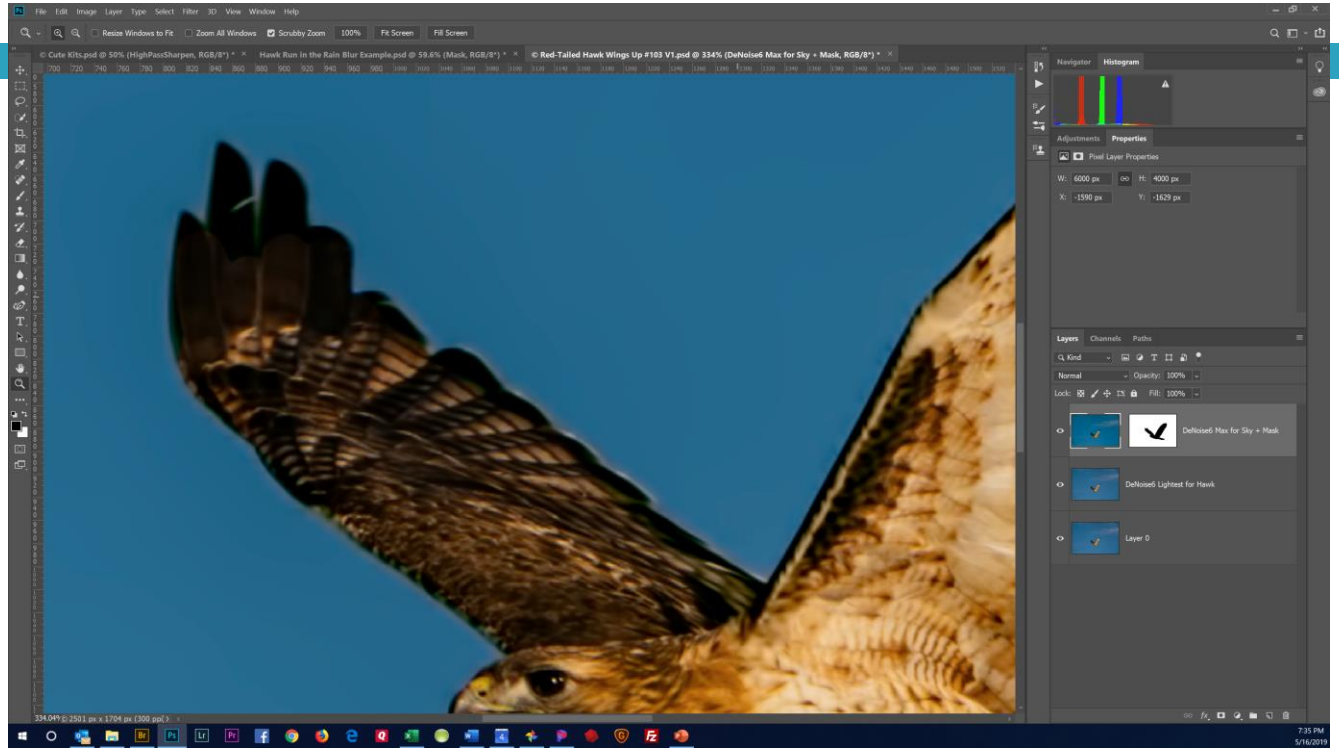


Sharpening

- Use High Pass Filter in PhotoShop
- Low Frequency pixels filtered out, High Frequency pixels remain
  - High frequency means High contrast between adjacent pixels
    - Typically seen in edges
- Filter>Other>High Pass, enter 1-3 until outline is faint
  - Can experiment with different values
- Then apply Overlay Blend Mode
  - Increases the contrast on just those high frequency pixels giving the appearance of increased sharpness
- Beware of halos around subject

Sharpening

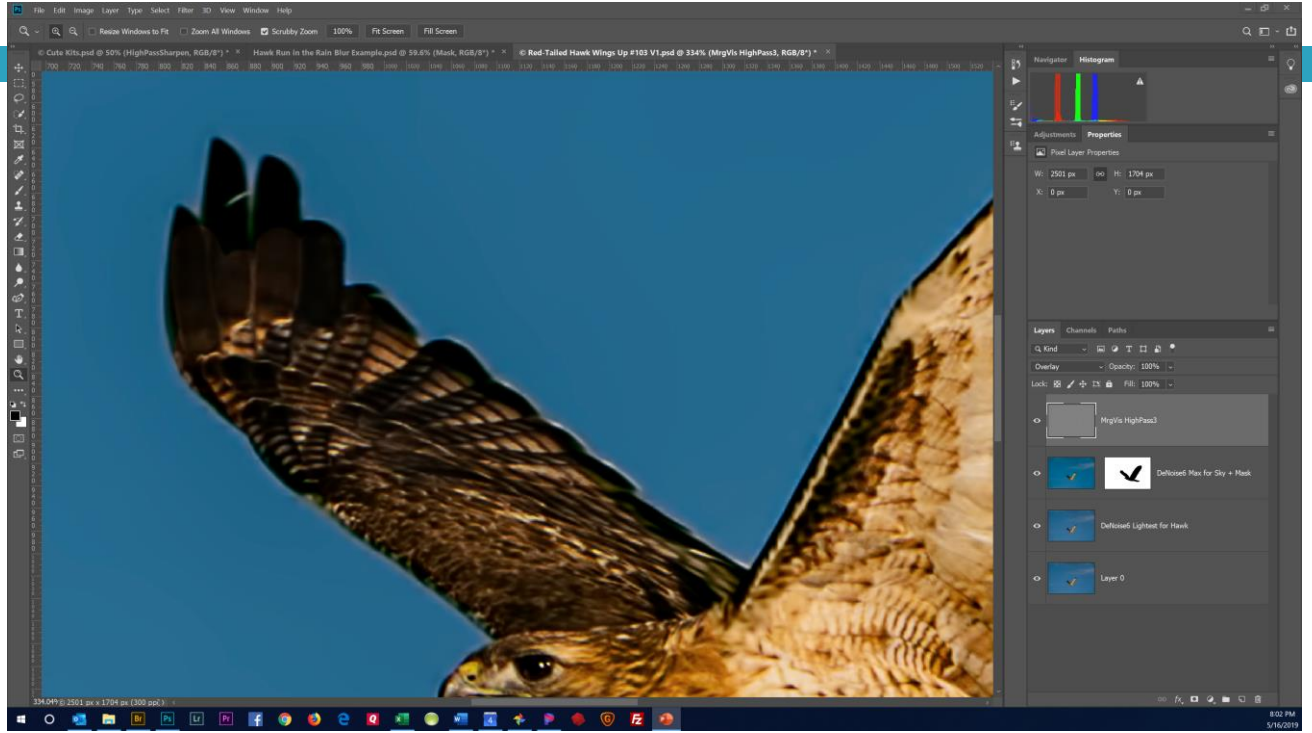
- Hawk could be sharper



Before High Pass Filter Applied

Sharpening

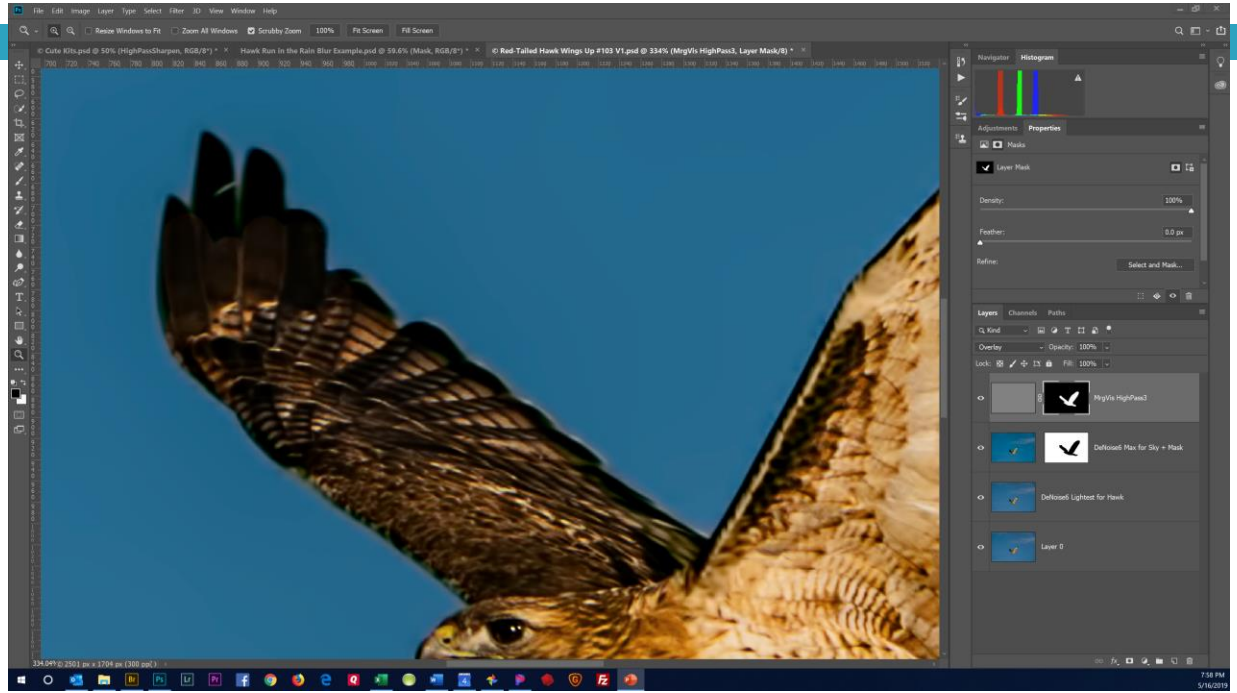
- High Pass Filter applied
- Compare before and after images to see increased sharpness
- Filter applied at value of 3 which is high and results in a halo on edges
- Create a layer mask that does not include the halo



After High Pass Filter Applied

Sharpening

- Layer mask created of hawk that excludes halo
- Must do a Merge Visible Layer command first (Layer>Merge Visible with ALT Key to create separate layer)
- No halo can be seen

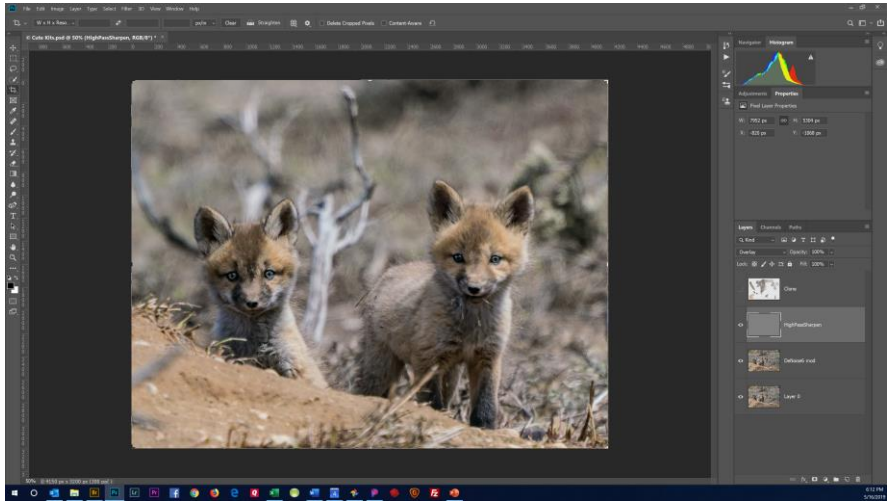


After Layer Mask Created of Hawk to Exclude Halo

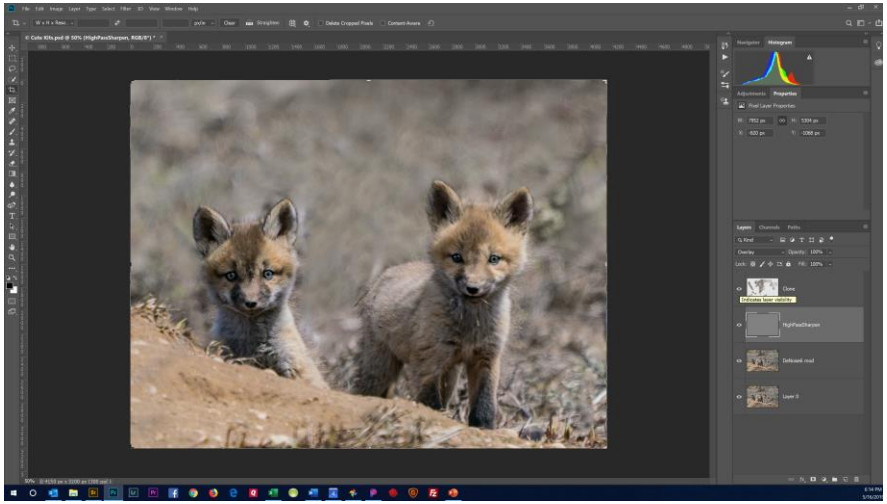
Blurring the Background

- In Camera – Open up the aperture to decrease Depth of Field creating background blur
- In PhotoShop – Clone out elements to blur background
  - Time consuming and not accurate
- In PhotoShop – Flat Background
  - Clip out wildlife, make mask, apply Filter>Blur Gallery>Field Blur
    - Beware of blur shadow
    - Topaz ReMask or PhotoShop "Select and Mask" to clip out the wildlife
- In PhotoShop – Graduated Background (foreground must stay sharp, distant background must be blurred)
  - Clip out wildlife, make mask, apply Filter>Blur>Tilt Shift Blur
  - See Seeley Tutorial "Graduated Background Blur" on www.richardseeleyphotography.com

Clone Out Background Distractions

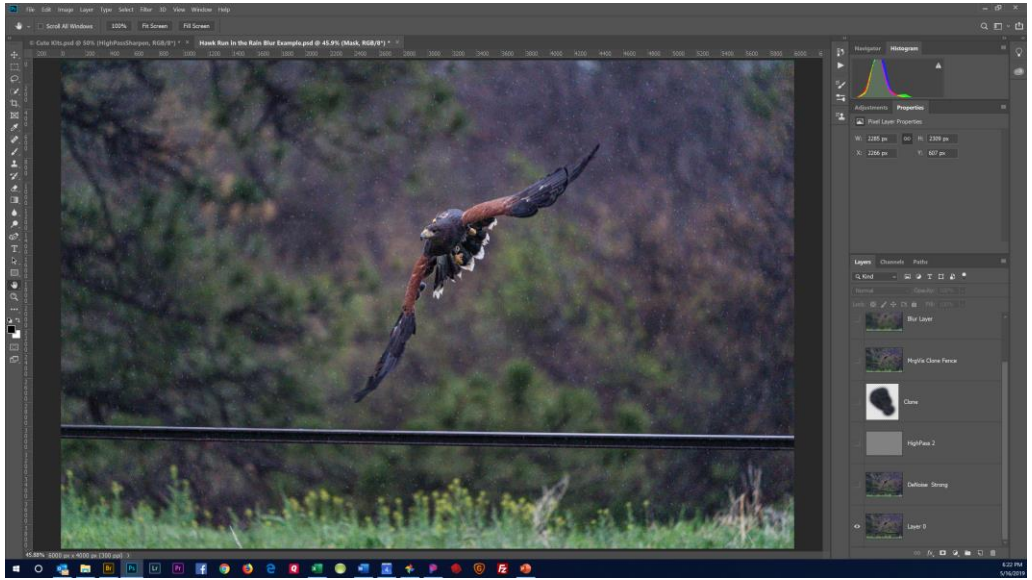


Before Cloning



After Cloning

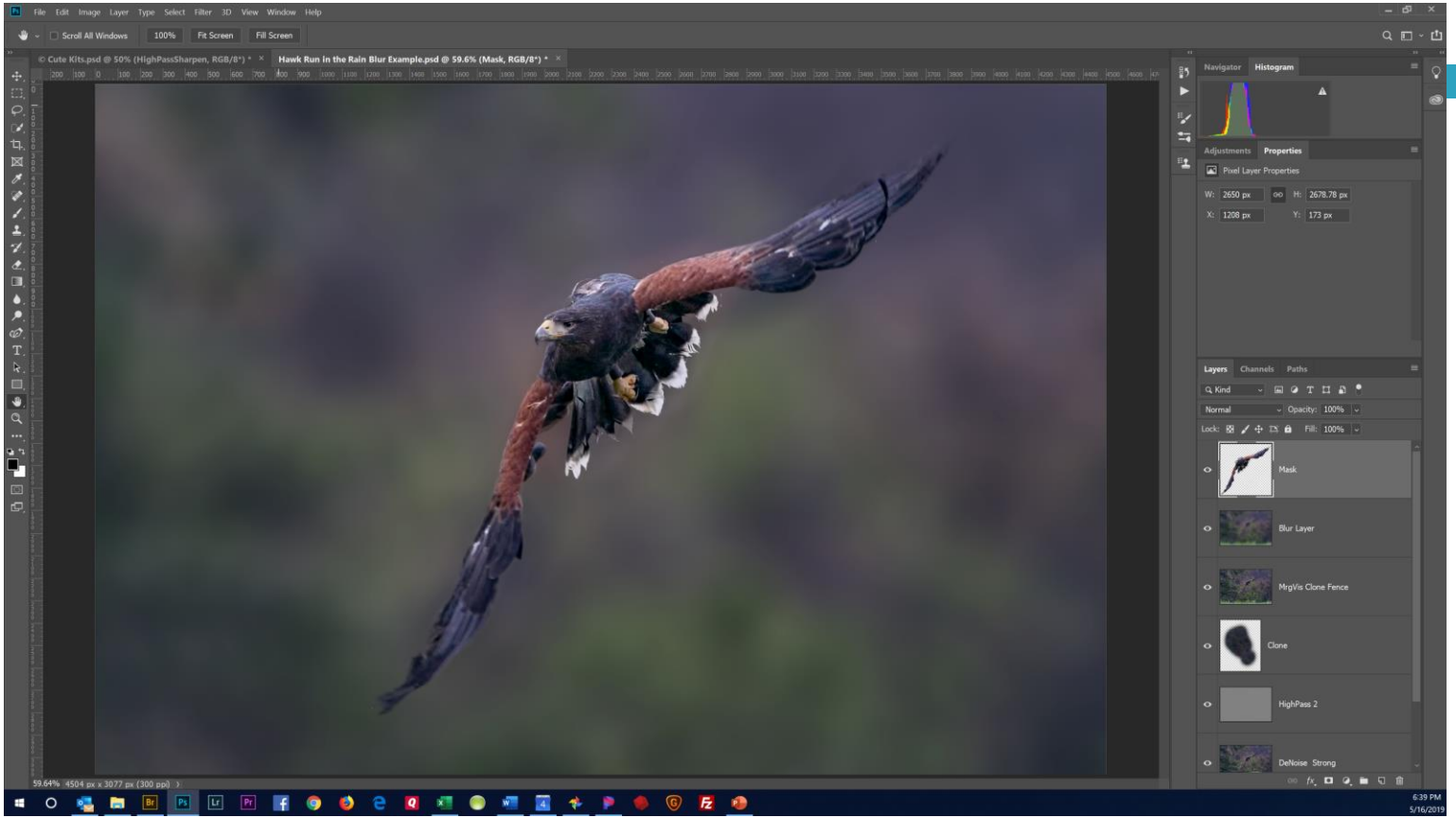
Blur the Background – Flat Background



Before Processing

- Harris's Hawk
  - ISO 6400, Noisy, Raining, Fence
- Steps
  - Reduce noise – Topaz DeNoise6
  - Sharpen – High Pass filter
  - Clone out grommet on leg
  - Clone out fence
  - Create Mask of Hawk using Topaz ReMask or PS Select>Select and Mask
  - Create Blur layer using Filter>Blur Gallery>Field Blur or Gaussian Blur
  - Experiment with different degrees of blur
  - Remove Blur Shadow
    - Clone out shadow or
    - Edit>Free Transform to enlarge hawk to cover shadow
  - Crop

Blur the Background – After Processing



Graduated Background Blur

See Seeley Tutorial “Graduated Background Blur” on www.richardseeleyphotography.com>Presentations

Before

After