

FOCUS

Newsletter of the Mayslake Nature Study and Photography Club
Hosted by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County
Visit our website at www.naturecameraclub.com



Highlights

October 1
Competition

October 15
Preparing Images
for Competition
Fred Drury

November 5
Non-Competitive Critique

November 19
Prairie Watching
Lloyd and Mary McCarthy

December 3
Competition

December 17
Christmas Party

Critique Night November 5th

Sheila Newenham

Bring your nature-themed prints and e-mail nature themed digital images to have them critiqued. Each member can submit up to 3 images. If you want to improve your scores in competition or make a print on your wall a bit better, this night is for you. Whether you're an accomplished photographer or just getting started, another person's perspective and opinions will expand your vision. There is much greater opportunity for detailed suggestions in this format than we have on competition nights. You won't be disappointed. E-mail images to mlnpc@competition.com by Sunday, October 28th and bring your prints!

Competition

Digital images for the December 3rd competition are due by Sunday, November 25th. Thank you to everyone for naming your digital images for the club viewer software. It made a HUGE improvement in the process.

Competition

October 1, 2012
December 3, 2012
January 21, 2013
April 1, 2013

CACCA Report - October, 2012

Chuck Klingsporn

The 2012-13 CACCA competition year starts on Saturday, October 13. It is the first time we will have our club competition winners compete in the two new categories the Mayslake Board approved earlier this summer. So, with double the entries, I'm pretty sure that we will have more CACCA awards to report and ribbons to distribute in the coming months. If you want a refresher on the way the new designations will operate, please reread the article in our September Focus or contact me at northrockies@aol.com.

During the first week in October, by email, I'll contact all of you that participated in either print or digital competitions last year. The intent of the email is to let you know which CACCA category you'll compete in, if/when you win awards here at Mayslake. If you didn't compete last year or are new to the club, you will compete in CACCA category B unless you choose to compete in A by letting me know of that desire before Thursday, October 4.

Throughout the year, I'll also continue to let individuals know how their images scored at CACCA and whether awards are won. For those of our members that win Honors or Awards at our competition on 10/1, you will receive an email notification if your entry will be entered into the CACCA competition. Remember that, in each of the two CACCA categories, we are only allowed three entries in small print and three in digital for each monthly competition and our stated goal is to have as many different people get a chance to participate at CACCA as possible.

It should be a great competition year! Good Luck to all of you!

EXHIBITS

Janice Henry

Heads up!

I have exciting news for our club. Over the next four months we will be having the following:

- A new show in our ongoing exhibit space that starts in November.
- A group show at the Mayslake facility during the First Folio season in early 2013.

The theme for the next show in our exhibit space is "Fall Water Images". I will be sending out an email with more details about this exhibit soon.

The photo exhibit at the Mayslake facility will be from January 15-March 4. We don't have details yet, but start looking through your images for some possible entries for the exhibit.

I will send out more information soon about both of these opportunities.





Monarch Landing
Barb Work



Pat Lavelle



Tall Goldenrod
Bill Pehrson

Russell R Kirt Prairie September 8, 2012

It was a quick morning shoot at the College of DuPage prairie for 10 Mayslakers. With 19 acres, that included 11 acres of reconstructed prairie and savanna, 6 acres of marsh, and over a mile of trails wandering through it all, there was lots to see and photograph. In spite of the summer draught, this prairie seemed to be in good condition. Although the wind also joined us, it paused from time to time to allow us some great opportunities, but for some, the wind was a part of the experience.

The Photo Challenge was a word and/or concept. "Up" and/or "Down" was the theme, and for most, this meant to look up and down which caused us to make sure we were looking at everything. For a few, this meant something else. Be sure to check out the Mayslake Website for the both the Photo and Nature Challenge and don't forget to click on the "i" to see the titles for both.



Blazing Through the Bur Oak
Duane Heaton

Trip Report
Little Red Schoolhouse
September 16
Gail Chastain

The Little Red Schoolhouse is part of the historic past of Palos Hills. It was built in 1886 to replace a one-room log cabin school, the first school building of the area. With a new Nature Center next to the Long John Slough, as well as 2.5 miles of trails through Oak forest, and savanna, there was lots of photographic opportunities for Mayslakers.

The 16 Mayslakers , with one guest, were given two challenges for this outing, should they choose to take them. The Photo Challenge “Patience” was inspired by a recent lecture by Lou Nettlehorst. Mayslakers were challenged to find a subject and not just shoot one or two images, but to have patience and work with the subject. For the Nature Challenge, they were give a number of different definitions of the word “Slough” and asked to take an image that reflected that definition.

Be sure to visit the Mayslake Website under the Trip Blog to see the results of the challenges, as well as more images from the outing. Don't forget to click on the “I” icon to see the titles.



Red Eared Slider
Barbara Work



Chuck Klingsporn



Sandy Karasek



Slough Swamp
Elaine Allen

Trip Report
4th Monday Outing - September 24
Springbrook Prairie

Gail Chastain

A change of plan occurred! This outing was originally scheduled to go to Cantigny, but it came to our attention (Thanks Steven Mayer!) that Springbrook Prairie in Naperville, was in full bloom. So a quick vote occurred and the change was made.

Springbrook is 1867 acres of grassland and streams, with over 7 miles of trails to see it all. So a great location for a last minute switch. The Challenge for this outing was to identify something besides the Goldenrod. Be sure to visit the website to see the results of the challenge, and all the images from the outing.

Be sure to visit the Mayslake Website under the Trip Blog to see the results of the challenges, as well as more images from the outing. Don't forget to click on



Steven Mayer



Sue Gajda



Atala Toy



John Van De Brandt has had a love affair with photography nearly all his life. He's experienced in the art of wedding, portrait, product and model photography. It wasn't until the last ten years however, that he merged his enthusiasm for photography with his fascination with the natural world.

A long-time "birder", John has seen over 500 species of birds in the lower 48 states. The urge to capture some of those sights formed the basis of his true passion – wildlife photography. Before long, he dropped all other forms of photography to focus solely on wildlife.

In 2007, John founded his wildlife photography company, Wild Wind Images LLC. In addition to selling framed fine art prints, stock photography and speaking, Van Den Brandt's nationally distributed calendars have sold over 70,000 copies.

John credits his knowledge of animal behavior and habitat, along with exceptional patience and a creative eye to produce images that uniquely capture his subjects in their essence. When not exploring the remote reaches of the globe, Van Den Brandt makes his home in northeastern Wisconsin with his wife Jean, his "photo assistant, travel companion and source of all inspiration."

All of the creatures found in John's images are certified to be wild and free. He doesn't use game farm animal models or digital manipulation beyond normal darkroom techniques.

John hopes his work inspires viewers to find and explore their own wild places and to experience first hand the beauty and drama of the natural world.

SAVE THE DATE
> SATURDAY <
APRIL 13TH
---- 2013 ----

In the last column I showed you more about the Basic panel. In this column I'll move on to the Tone Curve panel. This column will focus on Tone Curve basics: what the Curve does and the functionality contained in the Curve panel.

In the Basic panel it is possible to adjust pretty much anything related to image exposure. This includes: correcting for overexposure; correcting for underexposure; darkening or lightening an image; and reducing or increasing contrast. The Recovery and Fill Light sliders even make it possible to alter the fundamental structure of the histogram. The Tone Curve in Lightroom has pretty much the same functionality as Curves in Photoshop. In both cases, by manipulating the curve, one changes the relationship of the tonal values. Most of the time one does the initial exposure adjustments in the Basic panel, and then optionally chooses to use the Tone Curve to fine-tune the result¹. Effective curving in Lightroom is all about using increased contrast to draw the viewer's eye to the subject of the image.

Tone Curve Basics

There are actually two versions of the Tone Curve in Lightroom. **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** shows what is called the Parametric Tone Curve, while **Figure 3** shows the other version called the Point Tone Curve (the fact that Lightroom includes the descriptor 'Point Curve' at the bottom-left of both is not helpful). Both curves versions work in a fundamentally similar manner. In either case the curve allows you to specify desired changes in tonal values. **Figure 4** is the Parametric Curve with some additions in red. The square region outlined in red is the working part² of the curve. The horizontal axis of the square is the input tonal values and the vertical axis is the output tonal values. The default 'curve' (Linear in this case) is the diagonal line extending from the bottom-left to the top-right.

The curve works like this: imagine a mid-tone pixel in the image (it's tonal value is mid tone, right in the

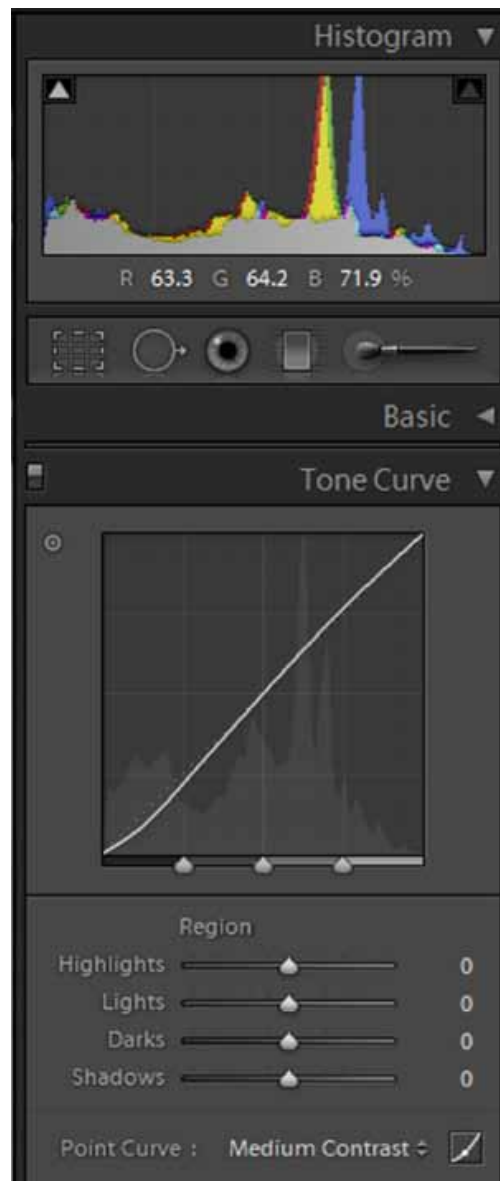


Figure 1 shows the right side of the Lightroom screen with the Histogram and Tone (Parametric Curve version) panels open. Keep in mind that the Histogram in Lightroom is 'live'. Any changes made to the image produce immediate updating of the Lightroom Histogram.

- 1 It's worth emphasizing again that the Basic panel sets the stage for Develop module image optimizing. The process always begins with the Basic panel, and what follows in the other panels compliments that which was done earlier.
- 2 In the background is the outline of the image histogram. It's not of much use as it only shows the initial distribution of the pixels; it does not 'update' as adjustments are made. However, the Histogram at the top of the right side in the Develop module (see Figure 1), does update as changes are made in any of the Develop module panels.

middle, halfway between black and white). You can visualize the effect of the curve on that pixel's tonal value as follows. Enter the curve at the pixel's initial tonal value, i.e., at the mid-point of the horizontal axis. Now move vertically up to the 'curve' and make a 90° turn toward the left, then move horizontally to the vertical axis (Figure 4). When the curve is a straight line like either Figure 2, Figure 3 or Figure 4, the output tonal value of the pixel will be at the mid-point of the vertical axis. This straight line curve delivers a mid-tone output tonal value, exactly the same as the input tonal value. The same is true for any other input pixel value; the output will be the same as the input. A straight line curve produces no change in any tonal value, and therefore no change in the image.

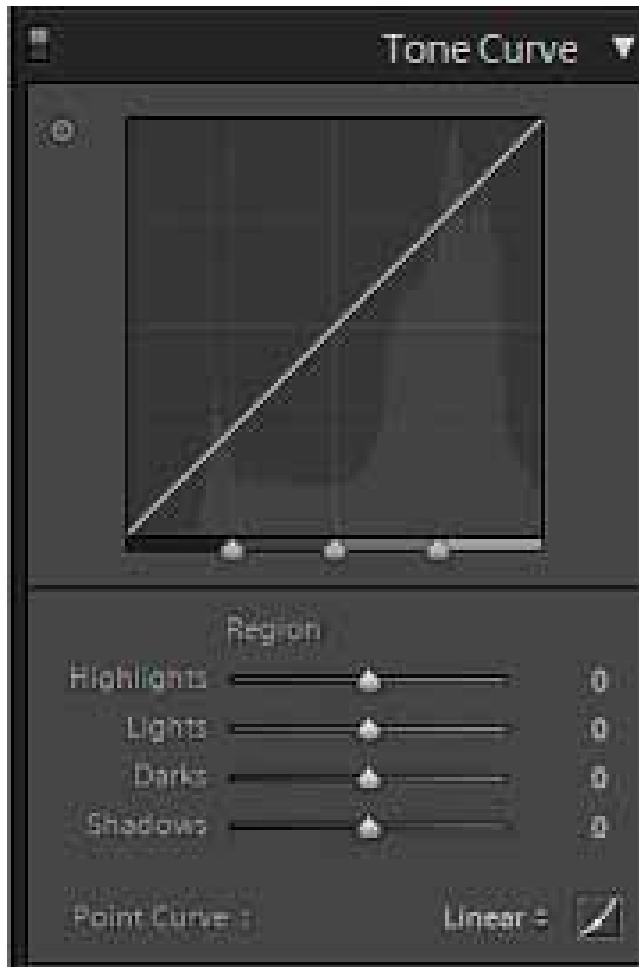


Figure 2 (above) is the Parametric Tone Curve. Figure 3 (below) is the Point Tone Curve. You switch from one to the other by clicking on the small curve icon in the lower right corner.

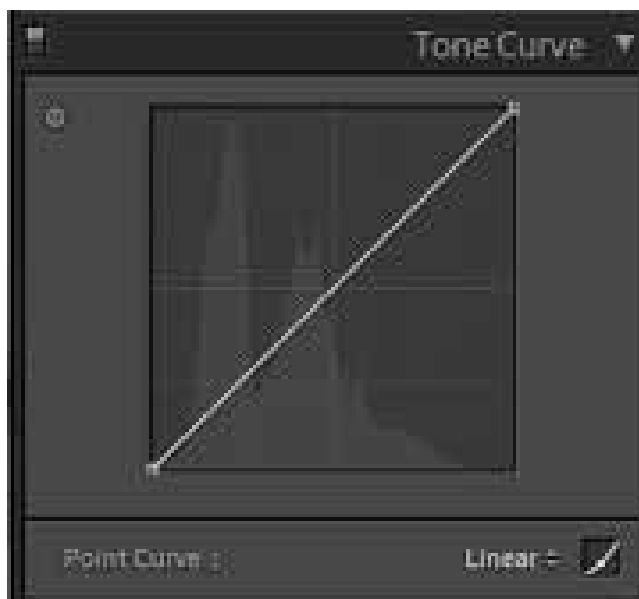


Figure 5 shows a Parametric Tone Curve where the mid-point has been raised upwards. Enter the panel at the mid-tone pixels initial value, which is the mid-point of

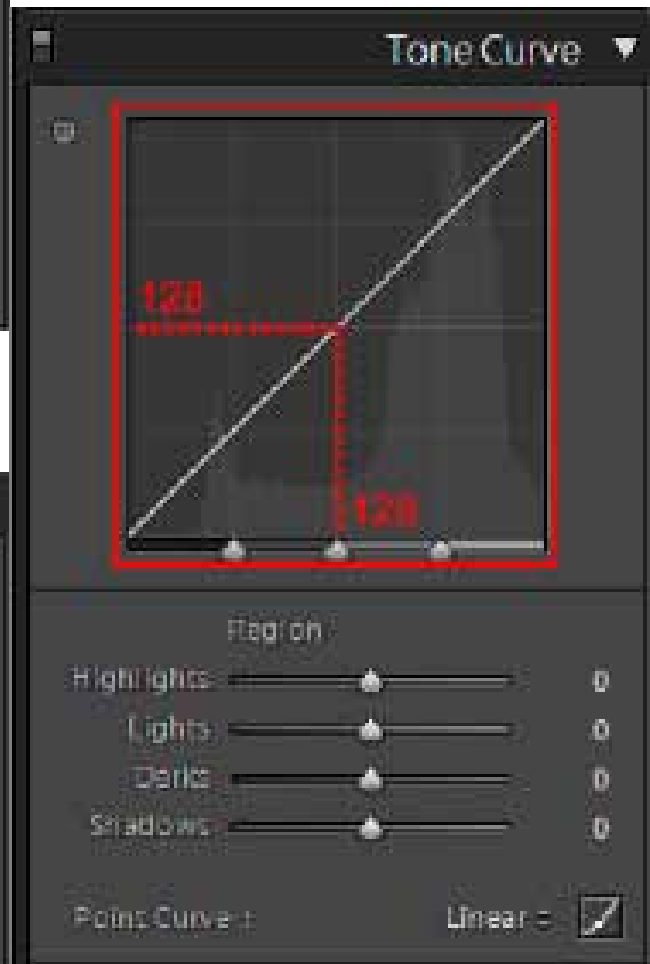
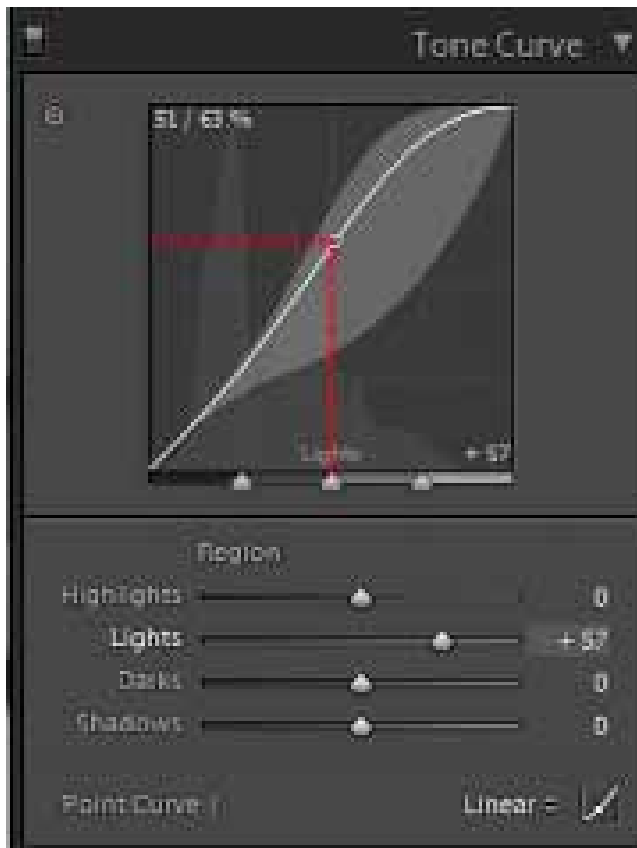


Figure 4 is the Parametric Tone Curve with some additions for purposes of explanation.



In Figure 5, the midpoint of the curve has been moved upwards with the result that the midtones have lighter output tonal values. Because this curve is slightly above the 'curve' in Figure 3, all other tonal values have also been lightened.

point at upper right is above and to the left of the dotted line so this pixel and others in the immediate region have been lightened. Conversely, the point at the lower left is below and to the right of the dotted line; that pixel and other in the immediate region have been darkened. We 'see' the result of this combination of lightening and darkening (increasing the steepness of the curve) as an increase in contrast. The increased contrast attracts the viewer's eye. It is appropriate to increase contrast (steepen the curve) within the region occupied by the primary subject of an image because it will draw attention to that region. Caution must be exercised as too much contrast can be just as bad as too little.

In summary, what you do to increase contrast is to steepen the curve. Steepening

the horizontal axis. Move vertically up to the curve and again make a 90° turn to the left and proceed horizontally to the vertical axis. This time the result is a pixel whose luminosity has been increased, in other words its tone has been lightened. Similarly, because the curve is generally above and to the left of its initial position (the diagonal line in **Figure 4**), all pixels (except those which are white and black) have been lightened, although not to the same degree as the mid-tone pixel.

Clicking on the up/down arrow heads just to the right of the word 'Linear' at the bottom-right of **Figure 5** gives you a choice of three curve settings. Choosing 'Strong Contrast' produces **Figure 6**. This curve has an sort of slanted 'S' shape to it and all curves of this shape increase contrast. Here's the reason: there are two points on the curve which have changed its shape from a straight line; the

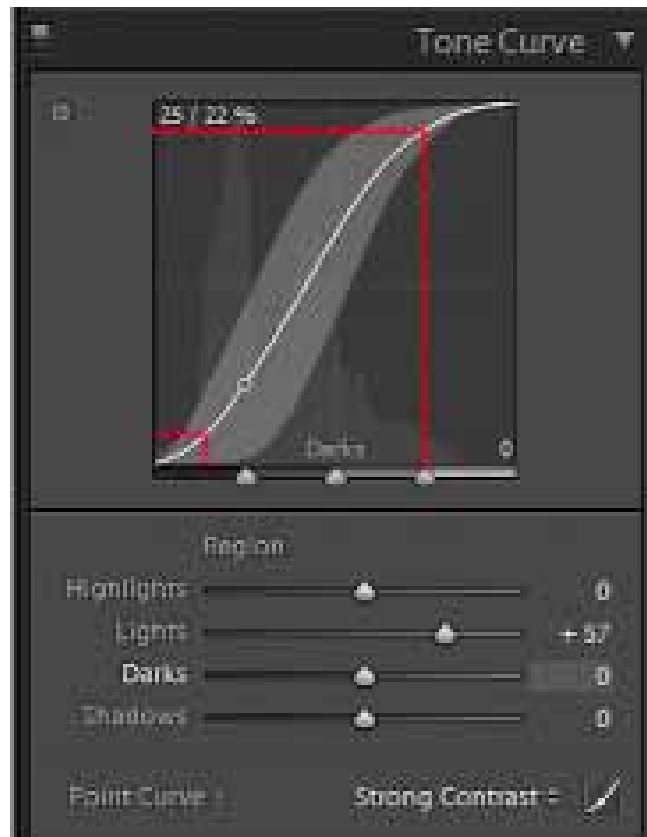


Figure 6 shows the 'Strong Contrast' version of the Parametric Curve. An 'S' shape steepens the curve as compared to the original. The effect on the image is to increase contrast within the steepened region.

the curve assigns a greater tonal range to those regions of the image that lie within the steeper portion of the curve. However, this is a 'zero-sum' game. Tonal range is finite. When the curve is steepened in one range, it necessarily is flattened in some other range. Effective curving in Lightroom is all about using increased contrast to draw the viewer's eye to the subject of the image.

Parametric Tone Curve

Following are some additional notes about how to use all the Parametric Tone Curve's functionality. The best way to learn how to use it is to see it put into action and to practice with it yourself. Referring to **Figure 7**:

1. When you click on the double-head to the right of #2, a drop down opens giving you a choice of Linear (straight line, as shown), Medium Contrast (a moderate 'S' curve) or Strong Contrast (a more extreme 'S' curve).
2. Use the sliders (#1) to increase or decrease contrast in the different regions of an image. Moving a slider to the right steepens the curve (in that region), moving it to the left flattens the curve.

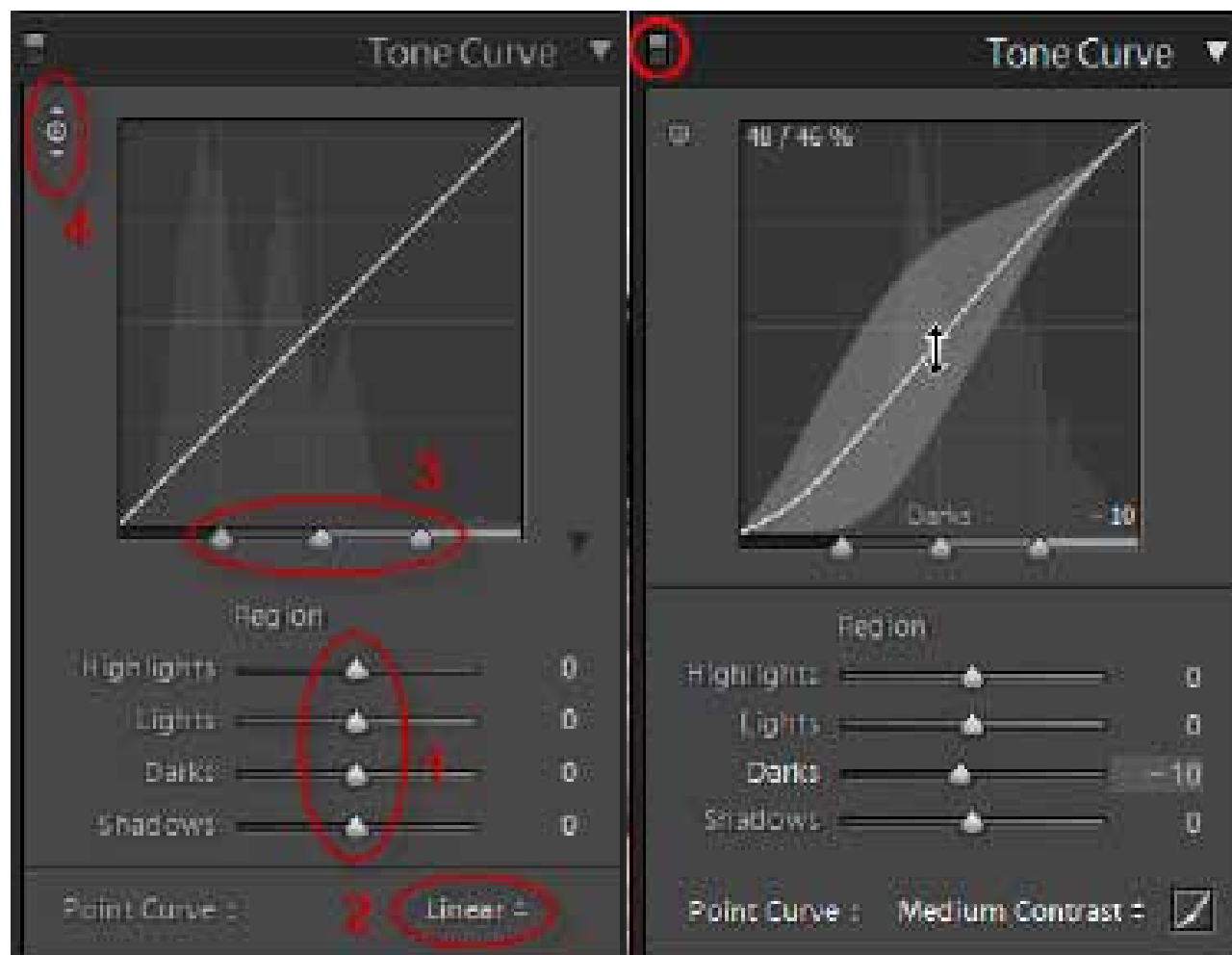


Figure 7 (left) is the Linear version of the Parametric Curve. The red markings show how various 'parameters' can be altered to produce desired changes in the curves shape and position. **Figure 8** (right) shows adjustment of the parametric curve. Medium contrast has been selected. Placing the mouse in the curve window enable the gray 'envelope' display. Drag up to lighten or down to darken. Alternatively use the sliders below the curve window. Don't forget the ON/OFF switch at the top left, which shows you either 'before' or 'after' views.

3. The points along the horizontal axis of the curve (#3) can be moved to redefine the curve's regions.
4. #4 is switch called the Target Adjustment Tool (TAT). Click on the little circle to turn the tool on. Then move the mouse over the image. Pick a spot on the image and drag down to darken or drag up to lighten. This is another of Lightroom's image-interactive tools.
5. Just above the TAT is a switch³ that you can turn on and off. Turn it OFF to see the image before the tone curve is applied. Turn it ON to see the effect of the tone curve applied to the image.
6. Still another way in which you can adjust the tone curve is simply to click on it, and move the point up or down. You'll notice there's an 'envelope' which restricts the movement you can introduce.

An effective way to use the tool is to start by trying out the presets (#2) and selecting the one you think does the best job. Then examine the image and see where more of less contrast would be helpful. As you move your mouse over the curve you'll see a gray envelope around the curve (**Figure 8**) which shows you the limits of curve adjustment. You can click on the curve and drag it (up to lighten, or down to darken) as desired, noting the results in the main image window. Alternatively, use the 'region sliders' (#1) to make these adjustments. You may also find it helpful to use the TAT to adjust the tonality of a particular portion of the image. Throughout, you will find it helpful to use the ON/OFF switch to compare after and before.

Point Tone Curve

The Point Tone Curve in Lightroom functions the same as the Curve in Photoshop, with none of the constraints present in the Parametric Tone Curve. When you place your cursor on the curve, a point is placed on the curve and a vertical line (**Figure 9**) appears. You can then move the point up or down along the vertical line and the curve changes shape accordingly. After gaining experience with the Parametric Tone Curve, and understanding the effects curve moves have on the image, you may find it simpler and quicker to use the Point Tone Curve.

In the next column, I'll show you how to draw Tone curves for some real images.

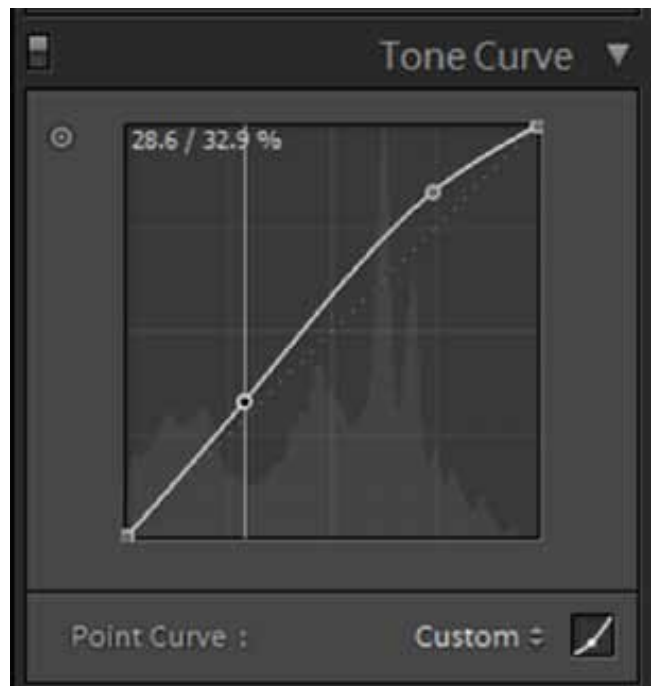


Figure 9 is the Point Tone Curve. When you place a point on the curve, a vertical line appears. You can then move the selected point up or down along the vertical line. The effect of changes to the curve are shown in the main image window as well as in the Histogram panel. Note that of the numerous controls present on the Parametric Tone Curve, only the TAT is present on the Point Tone Curve.

³ This switch is present on all of the right panels in the Develop module except for the Basic.