

...Blurred SoftLight Filtering with Luminance Mask...

With the on-going proliferation of phone/tablet cameras and associated auto-processing software, it is getting more challenging to provide a signature look to one's own photographic imaging style... ...a proven technique to increase contrasts and change colors has been SoftLight or HardLight filtering of an image with itself where image pixels with Luminances greater than 50% are brightened with decreased saturated colors and pixels with Luminances less than 50% are darkened with increased saturated colors.

I have found the following technique for landscape/nature scenes to be extremely useful in preserving/enhancing 'magic hour' lighting and adding a subtle and unique ambiance to the depicted visual elements...

1) Click on the 'Starting image' and 'Extract' its Luminance channel...



2) Open the 'Mask Tool-Brightness Curve' and lower-left Apply Add a StairStep curve [0,0] [50,0] [50,100] [100,100] to the 'Starting image's Luminance channel and leave 'active' [do not close the Mask Tool]... ...this mask will allow Amount control of image area tones/colors above and/or below a 50% Luminance...

3) Click on the 'Starting image' and apply a large radius Gaussian blur [perhaps Radius = or >100 for a 4000x2500 pixel image]; click OK... ...experimentation may be needed as Radius depends on image area size of the scene's visual element(s) as well as preference artistic content of the overall 'Starting image' dimensions...

4) Click on the resulting 3) image and open the 'Color Balance' transform at 'default' settings; click OK... ...this step expands the resulting 3) image to full range and removes black/white point color casts...

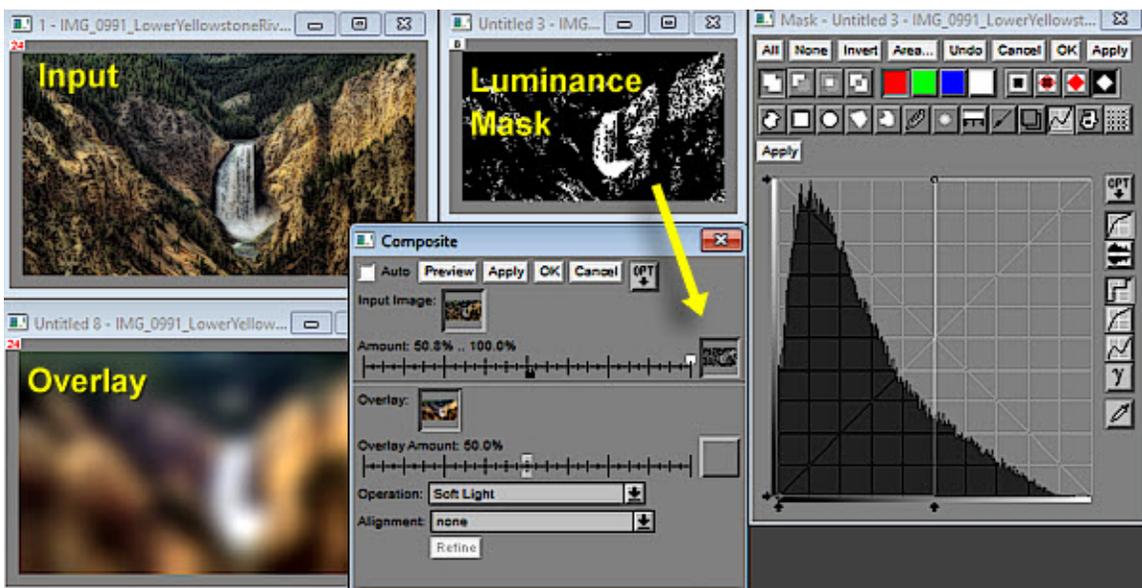
5) Click on the 'Starting image' and open the 'Composite-SoftLight' transform with: the Input = 'Starting image',

input Amount Mask = the 'active' resulting 2) mask; Overlay = the resulting 4) image... ..adjust input Amount mask white and black sliders and Overlay Amount slider to a preference while monitoring an 'updating' Preview... ..click Apply or OK...

6) Finalize: tone (dynamic range, contrasts, brightness); colors; sharpness; and composition...



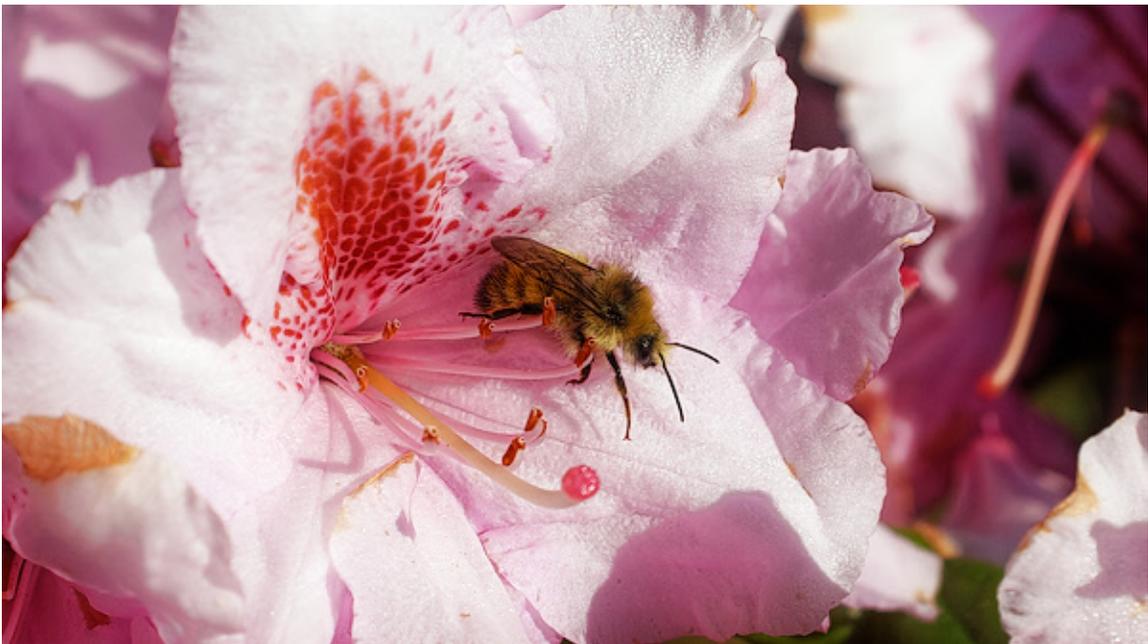
...perhaps initially Input Mask white = 100, Input Mask black = 50, and Overlay Amount = 50... ..this works particularly well to brighten image area Luminance's and decrease saturations above 50% without overly darkening Luminance's and increasing saturations below 50% where the 'Starting image' Luminance histogram distribution is mostly 65% or less as is the case for the illustrated 'Starting image'...



Here is another example where the 'Starting image' has a majority histogram distribution above a 50% Luminance and a narrow 'depth of field'...



In this example, the step 5) 'Composite-SoftLight' transform settings for the Input Amount Mask white = 25% and Mask black = 100% with the Overlay Amount = 100%; with the result trending towards a 'high key' diffuse ambiance...



...have fun experimenting... ..perhaps using HardLight !!!

...den...

... Addendum 170203...

As an alternative to the **Step 3)** 100% Amount Gaussian Blur... ...set the Amount to 75%. This seems to add edge contrasts (sharpening) as well as desired large radius Local Contrast Enhancement tonalities...

Starting image...



The resulting **Step 5)** image...

