

**Photo
Taken**

YOUR PHOTOS. ALWAYS WITHIN REACH.

User Manual

Version 1.2.5

LorMarSoft, LLC

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PhotoTaken User Manual

Your photos. Always within reach.

This manual is the long-form companion to the in-app **F1 Help** dialog (the source for that lives at phototaken/resources/USER_GUIDE.md). The Help dialog is a tight reference for someone who just needs a reminder. This Manual is the book you read once to understand how the app is built to be used, then keep as reference for the corners you don't hit every day.

Conventions used in this manual

PhotoTaken is a first-class app on **both macOS and Windows**, and the two behave identically except where a difference is genuinely the operating system's. To keep the text readable rather than doubling every sentence:

- **Modifier keys.** Shortcuts are written **Windows/Mac**, the Windows key first, the Mac key second, joined by a slash. **Ctrl/Cmd+P** means the Control key on Windows and the Command (⌘) key on Mac; **Alt/Option+Left** means Alt on Windows and Option (⌥) on Mac. A Mac keyboard has a Control key too, but it is *not* the shortcut key here, always use Command. The few shortcuts that genuinely differ between platforms are called out explicitly.
- **Function keys (F1, F2, F5...).** On most Macs the top-row keys default to hardware controls (brightness, volume, and so on), so a bare **F1** adjusts brightness instead of opening Help. To send the real function key, hold **Fn** (the **Globe** key on recent keyboards), for example **Fn+F1**, or turn on *System Settings* → *Keyboard* → "Use F1, F2, etc. keys as standard function keys" once and press them directly thereafter. Windows keyboards usually send function keys directly, but some laptops have an **Fn Lock**; if an F-key shortcut does nothing, try **Fn +** the key.
- **File paths.** Per-user data is shown in Windows form, `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\`. The Mac equivalent is `~/Library/Application Support/LorMarSoft/PhotoTaken/`. Everything below that folder is the same on both platforms.
- **The file manager.** "Explorer" (Windows) and "Finder" (Mac) are used interchangeably for the system file manager; a feature that says one works the same with the other unless noted.
- **The system trash.** Deleting sends files to the **Recycle Bin** on Windows and the **Trash** on Mac; the manual often writes "Recycle Bin / Trash" for both.

Where behavior truly differs by platform (installation, where the trash lives on a network share, cloud "online-only" files, and so on), the manual says so and gives both.

PhotoTaken comes in two editions, Light and Pro. Pro used to be called Full. If you bought Full, you already have Pro, and your license key stays the same. Everything in this manual works in both unless marked ◆, which means the feature is part of Pro. A whole action (Print, Convert to DNG, Export) still opens in Light and shows an upgrade prompt when you try it. A single row inside a dialog that otherwise works (the Ingest backup destination, the Pro-only IPTC fields) is greyed out instead, and hovering it says which edition it belongs to.

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Part I, Getting started

1. About PhotoTaken

PhotoTaken is a desktop photo workflow application for macOS and Windows, a first-class app on both. It's the fast local tool you use between the camera and your editor (Lightroom, Capture One, Photoshop): you ingest cards, cull and rate shots, add delivery metadata, rename for handoff, and send your selects on to whatever you use for RAW development or final retouch.

It is not a RAW developer. It does not replace Lightroom or Capture One for rendering. It is not a cloud library like Lightroom CC or Mylio. It is a single-process local app that runs fast on folders of a few hundred to tens of thousands of mixed JPEG and RAW images.



The About PhotoTaken dialog.

Who it's built for

PhotoTaken is built for working professional photographers, wedding, event, portrait, editorial, sports, whose day-to-day bottleneck is not the rendering pipeline but the cull. Folders of three to five thousand mixed JPEG + RAW images per shoot are normal. You need to get through that stack and make delivery decisions without the tool getting in your way.

The target user:

- Shoots RAW + JPEG together (or RAW only).
- Delivers JPEGs to clients from either the in-camera JPG or from a Lightroom export.
- Tags shots with star ratings and color labels to communicate cull decisions.
- Uses IPTC metadata (creator, copyright, caption, keywords) on every delivered file.
- Works on macOS or Windows, often with an external drive for storage.

If you shoot once a month as a hobbyist and use Lightroom for everything end-to-end, PhotoTaken isn't really aimed at you, you'd be installing a tool that duplicates capabilities Lightroom already has.

Design philosophy

Four principles drive almost every decision in the app.

Speed is the feature. Every other tool the target photographer has tried is painful on large folders. Scroll must be smooth. Folder open must feel instant on a previously-viewed folder. Thumbnail decode runs off the UI thread so the grid never stalls. If something ever feels slow, that's a bug, not a polish task for later.

Your files, on your disk. Nothing is uploaded. Nothing lives in a cloud library you don't control. Tags are written to the industry-standard XMP metadata inside your files (or to an adjacent `.xmp` sidecar for RAW). Copy your folder to another machine and your tags come with it. Delete PhotoTaken and your data survives completely intact.

Keyboard-first. Culling is a keyboard workflow. Rate with digits, color-tag with single letters, delete with Delete, advance with arrow keys. If you find yourself reaching for the mouse during a cull, something's wrong with the shortcut layout and we want to hear about it.

Opinionated defaults, minimal settings. The Preferences dialog is intentionally short. Defaults are chosen to match how working photographers actually operate, not to accommodate every possible workflow. When you do change a setting, the change takes effect immediately, no restart.

What PhotoTaken is not

Because this is the single most common confusion, here's what PhotoTaken intentionally does not do:

- **It doesn't develop RAW files.** The contact sheet shows the embedded JPEG preview a camera writes into a RAW; you see what the camera saw, not a re-rendered image. For develop-quality display, open in Lightroom or Adobe Camera Raw.
- **It isn't a full RAW-develop-and-export pipeline.** It does have a lightweight **Export / Convert** for handoff, resize, watermark, strip metadata, and write JPEG/PNG/TIFF/WebP (see Chapter 24b), but it does not render RAW develop settings. For develop-quality exports, use your RAW developer.
- **It doesn't sync to the cloud.** Tags live in your files. If you want cloud sync, back up the folder with whatever you already use, OneDrive, Backblaze, a NAS, and the tags come along for the ride.
- **It doesn't catalog photos across disconnected drives.** PhotoTaken browses folders that are currently mounted. Its cross-folder **Search** (Chapter 16) can index your whole configured library in the background, not just folders you've opened, but only your Favorites and any extra folders you've mounted and added in Preferences, not every drive you've ever owned. That catalog-across-everything database problem is out of scope.
- **It doesn't do face or object recognition.** Those are great features that belong in a different kind of tool.

How PhotoTaken fits your workflow

A typical day looks like this:

1. **Shoot.** Your camera writes JPG+RAW pairs to the card.
2. **Ingest.** Plug the card in. Use PhotoTaken's **Ingest** to copy the shoot to your working drive, optionally with a second copy to a backup drive. The ingest pass stamps your standard creator/copyright metadata onto every file via a Stationery Pad.
3. **First-pass cull.** Open the shoot folder in PhotoTaken. Rate the shots you'll use 1-3 stars, color-tag obvious picks red or green, delete rejects.
4. **Second-pass cull.** Filter to the 1-star-and-up shots. Compare near-duplicates side by side. Bump your selects to 4-5 stars.

5. **Tag for delivery.** Add per-shot metadata (headline, caption, city) through the IPTC editor.
6. **Rename.** Batch-rename your selects to `ClientName_YYYYMMDD_0001.jpg` style with the template engine.
7. **Hand off.** Drag the JPEGs into Lightroom for final render and export, or into your delivery folder, or directly into an email to the client. Hold Ctrl/Cmd to send the RAW versions instead.

PhotoTaken handles steps 2-6 end-to-end. Steps 1 and 7 live outside the app, and that separation is intentional: we do our job and get out of the way of the tools that do theirs.

2. Installation

PhotoTaken ships for Windows and Mac. On Windows you have two forms: a one-click installer (`PhotoTaken-Setup-<version>.exe` , the recommended path), and a portable ZIP (`PhotoTaken-<version>-windows.zip`) you can extract anywhere. On Mac PhotoTaken ships as a drag-to-install disk image (`PhotoTaken-Setup-<version>.dmg` , the recommended path) and a portable archive (`PhotoTaken-<version>-mac-silicon.zip`) for users who would rather skip the disk image. All four contain the same self-contained build, with Qt, Python, and ExifTool bundled in. The Windows installer adds Start Menu shortcuts, an optional Desktop shortcut, and an Add/Remove Programs entry; the Mac disk image presents an `Applications` shortcut so you can drag the app into place in one motion.

System requirements

Windows

- **OS.** Windows 10 (build 1809 or later) or Windows 11. PhotoTaken is actively tested on Windows 11 22H2 and later.
- **CPU.** Any 64-bit x86 CPU from the last decade. A modern multi-core CPU noticeably helps RAW thumbnail decoding.
- **RAM.** 8 GB minimum. 16 GB or more is recommended if you routinely browse folders with tens of thousands of RAW images.
- **Display.** 1920×1080 or larger. PhotoTaken is tested on 125%, 150%, and 200% display scaling, and on multi-monitor setups that mix DPIs.
- **Disk.** About 200 MB for the app itself. Thumbnail and folder-snapshot cache sizes are configurable in Preferences.
- **Runtime dependencies.** None to install separately, the app bundles everything it needs (Qt, Python, ExifTool). Adobe DNG Converter is an optional extra; see below.

Mac

- **OS.** macOS 12 (Monterey) or later. PhotoTaken is actively tested on the latest two macOS versions.
- **CPU.** Apple Silicon only (M1 and later). Intel Macs are not currently supported; contact support@lormarsoft.com if you need an Intel build.
- **RAM.** 8 GB minimum. 16 GB or more is recommended if you routinely browse folders with tens of thousands of RAW images.

- **Display.** Retina-class display recommended. PhotoTaken is HiDPI-aware and tested on built-in MacBook displays and external 4K/5K displays.
- **Disk.** About 200 MB for the app itself.
- **Runtime dependencies.** None to install separately. The bundled ExifTool is a Perl script and uses the Perl interpreter that ships with macOS.

Installing with the installer (recommended)

1. Download `PhotoTaken-Setup-<version>.exe` from the source you were given. First-time users: contact support@lormarsoft.com.
2. Double-click the installer. Accept the User Account Control prompt.
3. Choose an install location (default `C:\Program Files\PhotoTaken`) and decide whether you want a Desktop shortcut. Click **Install**.
4. Click **Finish**. The installer offers to launch PhotoTaken on the way out; the app opens to the first-launch Favorites prompt (see Chapter 3).

The installer creates a Start Menu group named **PhotoTaken** with three entries: the app itself, the user manual (PDF), and an Uninstall shortcut. It also registers an entry under **Settings > Apps > Installed apps** so you can uninstall later from one place.

The first time you run the installer, Windows shows a yellow **User Account Control** prompt asking whether to allow the app to make changes to your device. Click **Yes**. On unsigned beta builds the publisher reads as "Unknown"; on the signed release it reads as "LorMarSoft, LLC". On some configurations Windows also shows a **SmartScreen** screen ("Windows protected your PC") before the UAC prompt; if you see it, click **More info** then **Run anyway**. A fresh signed release may still trigger SmartScreen until it has enough install history to clear Microsoft's reputation check; the workaround is the same.

Installing the portable ZIP

Prefer the portable build when you want to run PhotoTaken from a thumb drive or shared folder, or when you don't have admin rights on the machine.

1. Download `PhotoTaken-<version>-windows.zip`.
2. Extract it. You'll get a folder named `PhotoTaken` with `PhotoTaken.exe` inside, plus the same supporting files the installer would have placed.
3. Move the folder wherever you want apps to live, then double-click `PhotoTaken.exe` to launch.

The portable build does not register an Add/Remove Programs entry, does not create Start Menu or Desktop shortcuts, and does not need uninstalling: just delete the folder when you're done.

Installing on Mac

PhotoTaken on Mac ships as a single `PhotoTaken.app` bundle, delivered either inside a disk image (recommended) or as a portable archive.

With the disk image:

1. Download `PhotoTaken-Setup-<version>.dmg` from the source you were given. First-time users: contact support@lormarsoft.com.
2. Double-click the disk image to mount it. A Finder window opens showing `PhotoTaken.app`, a shortcut to `Applications`, and the install docs (`README.txt`, `MANUAL.html`, `MANUAL.pdf`).
3. Drag `PhotoTaken.app` onto the `Applications` shortcut. The Finder copies the app into `/Applications`.
4. Eject the disk image (drag it to the Trash, or right-click and choose Eject).

With the portable archive:

1. Download `PhotoTaken-<version>-mac-silicon.zip`.
2. Double-click the archive. macOS extracts it to a `PhotoTaken` folder containing `PhotoTaken.app` plus the install docs (`README.txt`, `LICENSE.txt`, `MANUAL.html`, `MANUAL.pdf`), the same set that lives at the root of the disk image.
3. Move `PhotoTaken.app` to `/Applications`, your home folder, an external drive, or wherever you keep apps. The docs can stay in the extracted folder for reference, or move with the app. Double-click `PhotoTaken.app` to launch.

First launch. This build is signed with an Apple Developer ID certificate and notarized by Apple, so it opens like any other Mac app. The first time you open `PhotoTaken.app`, macOS shows the standard prompt for an app downloaded from the Internet ("PhotoTaken is an app downloaded from the Internet. Are you sure you want to open it?"). Click **Open**. That one-time confirmation is normal for every Mac app; there is no "unidentified developer" block and no right-click workaround.

What's in the disk image vs the .app. The Mac DMG keeps the install docs (`README.txt`, `MANUAL.html`, `MANUAL.pdf`) at the top of the disk image alongside `PhotoTaken.app`, not inside the bundle, so the app folder you copy to `/Applications` stays clean. Drag those files out of the disk image before ejecting if you want to keep them locally; the in-app **Help** button

on the toolbar (or **F1**) opens a shorter quick reference that works without the manual files being present. The bundled ExifTool lives inside `PhotoTaken.app/Contents/Resources/vendor/exiftool/`.

Verifying the version. In Finder, select `PhotoTaken.app` and press **Cmd+I** (or right-click → Get Info). The Version field shows the installed version. The running app also shows its version in the **About** dialog, opened by clicking the **PhotoTaken logo** at the left edge of the toolbar.

Upgrading to a new version. Quit the running app, then drag the new `PhotoTaken.app` from a fresh DMG (or extracted zip) onto `/Applications`. The Finder will offer to replace the existing copy; click **Replace**. Your settings, favorites, and Stationery Pads under `~/Library/Application Support/LorMarSoft/PhotoTaken/` (see Appendix B) are read by any PhotoTaken version, so you pick up right where you left off.

Uninstalling. Quit the app if it's running, then drag `PhotoTaken.app` from `/Applications` (or wherever you put it) to the Trash. Settings and tag caches under `~/Library/Application Support/LorMarSoft/PhotoTaken/` are intentionally left in place so a later reinstall picks up where you left off; remove them by hand for a fully clean state. Your photos and their XMP tags are untouched, PhotoTaken never owned your content.

What's in the install folder

Whether you used the installer or the portable ZIP, the install folder ends up with the same layout:

- `PhotoTaken.exe`, the app itself.
- `README.txt`, short install, first-launch warnings, uninstall, and bug-reporting notes.
- `MANUAL.pdf`, this manual as a PDF. Double-click to open in your default PDF viewer.
- `MANUAL.html`, the same manual as a styled HTML page. Double-click to open in your default browser. Useful when you want in-browser search, or when the PDF viewer isn't where you want to read.
- `vendor/exiftool/`, the bundled ExifTool binary the app uses for metadata reads and writes. Don't move or delete this folder.
- `_internal/` (or similar), the Python and Qt runtime PyInstaller ships with the app. Don't touch.

You can delete the two manual files if you don't want them taking space locally; the app doesn't depend on them at runtime. The toolbar's Help button (or F1) opens a shorter reference guide and works without the manual files being present.

Verifying the version

Right-click `PhotoTaken.exe` and choose **Properties** → **Details**. You should see:

- **File description:** PhotoTaken
- **Product name:** PhotoTaken
- **Product version:** the version you installed (e.g. `1.2.0`)
- **Company:** LorMarSoft, LLC
- **Copyright:** © LorMarSoft, LLC

The running app also shows its version in the **About** dialog (click the **PhotoTaken logo** at the left edge of the toolbar) once you've launched it, and the included `README.txt` restates the same version on its first line.

Optional: Adobe DNG Converter

If you want to use PhotoTaken's **Convert to DNG** action (see Chapter 24), install Adobe's free DNG Converter from:

```
https://helpx.adobe.com/camera-raw/digital-negative.html
```

PhotoTaken detects it automatically at the standard install paths (`C:\Program Files\Adobe\Adobe DNG Converter\Adobe DNG Converter.exe` or the x86 variant) plus anywhere on your system `PATH`. If it's missing when you try to convert, PhotoTaken shows a small dialog with a button that opens Adobe's download page directly.

You can run PhotoTaken without installing it; you'll simply be prompted on the first conversion attempt.

Adobe updates the DNG Converter whenever a new camera is released, so keeping it on its latest version makes sure newer bodies (e.g. the Nikon Z9 or the Canon R5 Mark II) are supported end-to-end.

ExifTool is bundled

PhotoTaken uses ExifTool for all metadata reading and writing, capture info in the Metadata panel, caption/copyright edits, IPTC editor writes, color/rating XMP, Stationery Pad application. A copy of ExifTool ships inside `dist/PhotoTaken/vendor/exiftool/` and the app prefers that local copy over anything on your system `PATH`.

You don't need to install ExifTool separately. If for any reason the bundled copy goes missing or the file is unreadable, the Metadata panel shows an "ExifTool not found" message and tag/caption writes silently no-op; Chapter 28 Troubleshooting has the recovery steps.

Running from source (developers)

If you're working on PhotoTaken itself, the repo's `README.md` covers the full dev setup. Short version:

```
python -m venv .venv
.venv\Scripts\activate
pip install -r requirements.txt
python main.py
```

In source mode you do need ExifTool on `PATH`. The simplest install is via winget:

```
winget install --id OliverBetz.ExifTool -e
```

Adobe DNG Converter is the same install as for an end-user build.

Upgrading to a new version

Upgrading is in-place. With the installer, run the new `PhotoTaken-Setup-<version>.exe` and accept the prompts; it will close the running app, replace the install folder, and leave your settings folder under `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\` untouched. With the portable ZIP, extract the new ZIP over the old folder (or to a fresh path if you prefer to keep the old one around as a fallback) and launch.

Your settings, favorites, and Stationery Pads live under `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\` (see Appendix B) and are read by any PhotoTaken version, so you pick up right where you left off either way.

Uninstalling

If you used the installer:

1. Quit the app if it's running.
2. Open **Settings > Apps > Installed apps**, find PhotoTaken, click the three-dot menu, and choose **Uninstall**. The Start Menu PhotoTaken group also has an **Uninstall PhotoTaken** entry that does the same thing.

3. **Optional:** to also remove your settings, favorites, and Stationery Pads, delete `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\` . The uninstaller deliberately leaves that folder alone so a later reinstall picks up where you left off; remove it by hand for a fully clean state.

If you used the portable ZIP, just delete the `PhotoTaken/` folder wherever you put it. Your settings under `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\` survive a portable-folder deletion the same way.

Your photos and their XMP tags are untouched, PhotoTaken never owned your content.

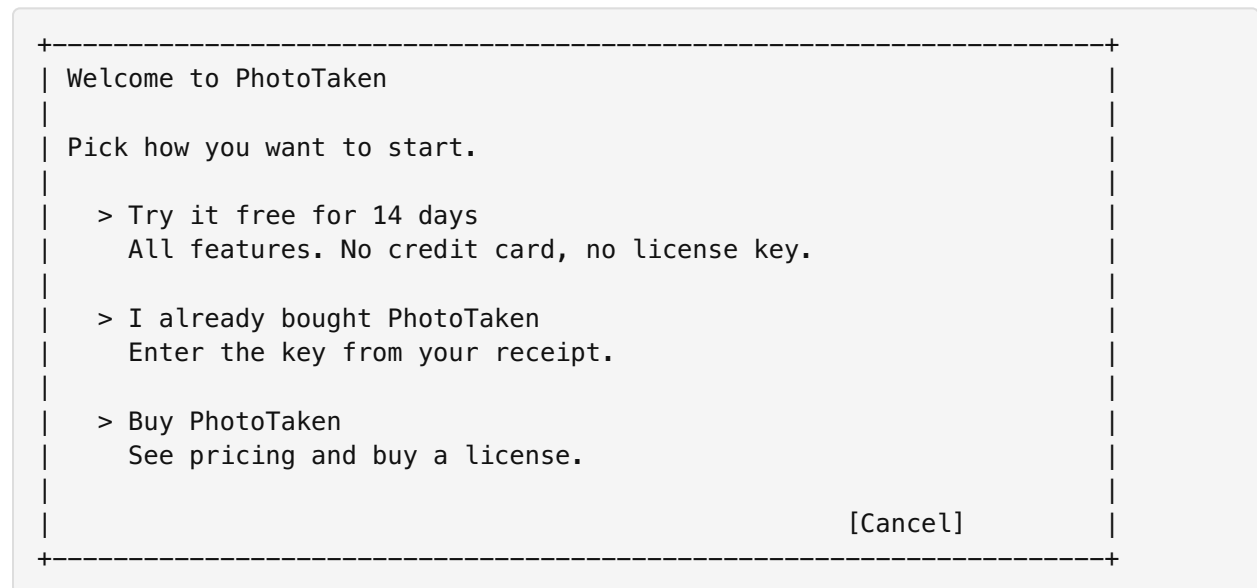
2a. License activation

PhotoTaken is sold as a one-time purchase, and it also offers a free 14-day trial. The first time you launch the app on a fresh install, before the main window appears, a small **Welcome to PhotoTaken** window opens and asks you to pick one of three things: try it free for 14 days, enter a key you already bought, or go and buy one. Whichever of the first two you pick, the app contacts the activation server once to register this computer. From that point on PhotoTaken works fully offline forever; there is no second phone-home, no periodic re-check, and no requirement that you stay connected to the internet to use the app.

This chapter walks through everything that can happen during activation, what to do if something goes wrong, and how to manage your license from inside the app once it is active.

2a.1 What the activation window asks for

The window has three screens. The first one just asks which way in you want.



```
+-----+
| Welcome to PhotoTaken                               |
| Pick how you want to start.                         |
|                                                       |
| > Try it free for 14 days                            |
|   All features. No credit card, no license key.     |
|                                                       |
| > I already bought PhotoTaken                       |
|   Enter the key from your receipt.                  |
|                                                       |
| > Buy PhotoTaken                                    |
|   See pricing and buy a license.                    |
|                                                       |
| [Cancel]                                             |
+-----+
```

Try it free for 14 days. Opens the trial form, below. No credit card and no license key, and nothing is switched off or watermarked during the trial.

I already bought PhotoTaken. Opens the license key form, below.

Buy PhotoTaken. Opens the PhotoTaken purchase page (<https://phototakensoftware.com/pricing.html>) in your default browser and leaves this window exactly where it is, because once you have bought, you come back here and choose **I already bought PhotoTaken** to type your key in.

Cancel. Closes the window and exits the app cleanly with no main window. PhotoTaken needs either a license key or a running free trial to start; without one it will not open.

If this computer's trial has already run out, the same window opens with a different framing. The heading reads **Your free trial has ended**, and **Try it free for 14 days** is not offered at all, because a second trial on the same computer is not something we can give you. What is left is the two choices that work: enter the key you already have, or go and buy one.

The trial form

```
+-----+
| Start your free trial                               |
| We only need an email address. Your trial runs for 14 days with |
| every feature switched on.                             |
|           Email: [_____]                               |
|           Enter your email to begin                     |
| Name this computer: [Mark's Mac                        ] |
| [ ] Email me tips and updates about PhotoTaken         |
| Back                                     [Start free trial] [Cancel] |
+-----+
```

Email. The address you want to trial with. The trial is tied to this address. Case does not matter (`Mark@Example.com` and `mark@example.com` are treated the same), and trimming whitespace is automatic.

The line under the email box tells you where you stand. It reads **Enter your email to begin** while the box is empty or holds something that is not an email address, and changes to **Ready. 14 days, all features.** as soon as what you typed looks like a real address. That is the moment **Start free trial** turns on: the email is the only thing the trial is waiting for.

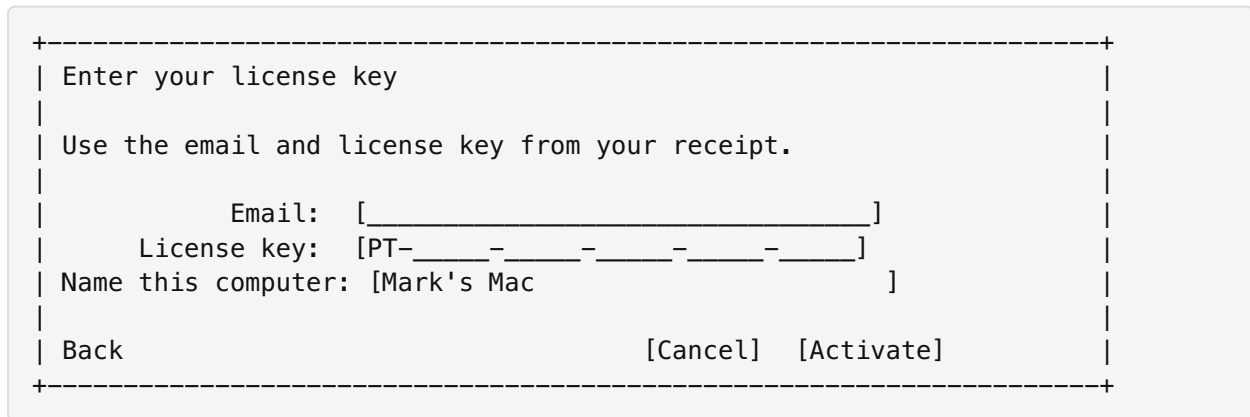
Name this computer. A friendly label that will show up in your license panel later if you need to identify this machine. Defaults to your computer's hostname (`Studio-PC` on Windows, `Marks-Mac` on macOS); change it to anything you find clearer.

"Email me tips and updates about PhotoTaken" checkbox. Unchecked by default. Ticking it opts you into occasional email from us; leaving it blank does not affect the trial either way.

Back. Returns to the three choices.

Start free trial. Fires the trial request using just your email; no key needed. See [Is there a trial version?](#) for what the trial includes and its limits.

The license key form



The screenshot shows a license key form with a dashed border. Inside, the text reads: "Enter your license key", "Use the email and license key from your receipt.", "Email: []", "License key: [PT- - - - -]", "Name this computer: [Mark's Mac]", "Back [Cancel] [Activate]".

Email. The address you used when you bought PhotoTaken. The license is tied to this address, and the same case and whitespace rules apply.

License key. A 32-character code in the form `PT-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX`. The first two characters identify the product, then four groups of five characters are the random license body, and a fifth five-character group is a checksum. The key uses the Crockford base32 alphabet (no `I`, `L`, `0`, or `U`, to avoid confusion with `1`, `Ø`, and `V`). You can paste the key in any form (lowercase, with or without hyphens, with stray whitespace) and the window normalises it. Typos like `I` for `1` or `0` for `Ø` are automatically corrected. If the checksum does not match, **Activate** stays switched off and the window never sends the request.

Name this computer. Same field, same default, as on the trial form.

Back. Returns to the three choices. It is hidden when you opened this form from inside the app (see below), because there is no chooser behind it in that case.

Activate. Fires the registration request using your email and license key. It turns on only once the email looks like an address and the key passes its checksum. The status line beneath the buttons tells you what happens next.

Opening this window later, from inside the app

Enter **license key**, on the trial-ending reminder and on **Preferences > License**, opens this same window straight on the license key form, with no chooser and no Back link. You already have a trial running at that point, so there is nothing to choose: the only thing left to do is type the key you just bought.

2a.2 The activation conversation

When you click **Activate**, PhotoTaken sends the activation server four facts: your license key, your email, a salted hash of a stable per-machine identifier (see Section 2a.6 for the security and privacy details), and the friendly label you chose. The server responds with one of seven outcomes. The window maps each to a specific message right under the buttons.

Outcome	What the window shows
Activation succeeded	The window closes, PhotoTaken writes a signed license file to disk, and the main window appears. No further messages.
Key not recognised	"That key wasn't recognised. Double-check the email you got from your purchase, or contact support@lormarsoft.com." Usually a typo in the key; sometimes a copy-paste truncated it.
Email does not match the key	"That key was issued to a different email. Use the email you bought with, or contact support@lormarsoft.com if this was a gift." Try the email on your purchase receipt verbatim.
License is revoked	"This license is no longer active. Contact support@lormarsoft.com." Refunded purchases land here.
Already active on two computers	The window expands with a panel listing the two machines, their friendly labels, and when each was last used. Each row has a Deactivate button. See Section 2a.4.
Too many tries from this address	"Too many activation attempts. Please try again in N seconds." The server rate-limits to discourage brute-force key guessing. Wait the listed time, then retry.
Cannot reach the server	"We couldn't reach the activation server. Check your internet connection and try again." Activation needs the internet for this single first call; everything after is offline.

All status messages render as plain text (the window deliberately ignores any HTML the server might return) so a hijacked activation response cannot smuggle clickable links or formatting into your screen.

2a.3 The two-machine cap

Every PhotoTaken license covers **up to two activated computers** at a time. Think of it as one for the studio Mac and one for the road laptop, or one for the desktop and one for a backup PC. Both can be active and offline simultaneously; PhotoTaken does not stop you from using either machine when the other is running.

When you try to activate a third computer, the window does not just refuse. It expands to show a **Currently active on:** panel listing your two existing activations:

Currently active on:

Studio iMac	• Mac	• last used 2026-05-01	[Deactivate]
Lorri's PC	• Windows	• last used 2026-05-04	[Deactivate]

Click **Deactivate** on whichever computer you want to retire, confirm the prompt ("Free the activation slot from Studio iMac?"), and PhotoTaken silently frees the slot and re-fires the activation from this new computer. The whole flow happens inside the same window with no need to email support or visit a web portal.

2a.4 What happens if you reinstall, restore from backup, or wipe the machine

PhotoTaken identifies each computer using a stable identifier the operating system already maintains: on Windows the `MachineGuid` set by Windows Setup, on macOS the hardware-derived `IOPlatformUUID`. This identifier:

- **Survives** reinstalling PhotoTaken, upgrading PhotoTaken, restoring your home folder from a backup, or any normal operating-system update.
- **Changes** only when you do a full clean reinstall of Windows or restore macOS to a different physical machine.

So a routine PhotoTaken uninstall + reinstall on the same computer does **not** burn a slot; the server recognises the machine and re-issues a fresh license file with no action on your part. The activation file (`license.json`) survives the PhotoTaken uninstaller by design: it lives next to `settings.json` in your AppData folder, which the installer deliberately leaves alone so your preferences come back when you reinstall.

A clean Windows reinstall, a hardware swap, or restoring your backup onto a new physical Mac, on the other hand, will look like a new computer to the activation server. The window opens on first launch, the activation hits the two-machine cap if both your existing slots are still claimed, and you free a slot by deactivating one of the old machines from the panel described above.

2a.5 Managing your license after activation

Once PhotoTaken is activated, two places inside the app show your license details. A free trial looks different in both of them, and counts itself down in two more places besides. Section 2a.5a covers the trial; this section is the paid copy.

Preferences > License is the main control. Open **PhotoTaken > Preferences...** (Mac) or **Edit > Preferences...** (Windows) and click the **License** tab. You'll see:

- The license key, with the four middle groups masked (`PT-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-XXXXX-EEEE`) so a glance at your screen does not expose your purchase to whoever is nearby. The full key lives in `license.json` if you need it.
- The email your license is tied to.
- The friendly label you gave this computer at activation.
- The date you activated this computer.

A **Deactivate this computer** button at the bottom frees this machine's slot. You'll see a confirmation prompt ("This will free this computer's activation slot so you can activate PhotoTaken on a different one. The app will close after deactivation."), then PhotoTaken contacts the server, deletes the local license file, shows you a brief confirmation, and exits. The next launch on this computer will show the activation window again, so you can either re-activate or leave the slot free for another machine.

The **About PhotoTaken** dialog (click the logo in the toolbar or pick **About PhotoTaken** from the application menu) shows a **Licensed to** line under the version number, followed by your email. Useful as a quick check that the app is using the account you expect. During a trial the same line reads **Free trial:** instead, so it never tells you that you own something you have not bought yet.

During a trial, and only during a trial, that line is followed by **Buy PhotoTaken** and **Enter license key**, the same pair as on the License tab. A paid license shows neither, because there is nothing left to buy and nothing left to type. Activate a key from here and the dialog redraws itself on the spot: the line becomes **Licensed to**, the two buttons go away, and the title bar stops counting down.

2a.5b Picking up a Light to Pro upgrade

Buying the upgrade does not change your license key, and it does not send you a new one. The purchase flips your existing key from Light to Pro on our server; the app has to ask for that before anything changes on your screen.

To pick it up straight away: open **Preferences**, click the **License** tab, and click **Check for upgrade**. PhotoTaken re-activates against the server, and if the upgrade is there it confirms with "You now have PhotoTaken Pro. Everything that was marked (the diamond) is now unlocked." Every gate opens on the spot: no restart, no reinstall, and the License tab redraws itself to show the new edition.

If the button reports **No upgrade found for this license key**, the purchase has not reached our server yet. Give it a minute and click it again.

If you never click it, PhotoTaken still gets there on its own. A Light copy quietly re-checks at launch, at most once an hour, and applies the upgrade when it finds one. That check is deliberately silent: it never interrupts you, and it never complains when the network is down. The trade is speed, so the button is the fast path and the automatic check is the safety net for anyone who deletes the email.

2a.5a What the app shows you during a free trial

A running trial is visible in three places. None of them interrupt your work, and all three disappear the moment you activate a purchased key.

The title bar counts down. The window title reads `PhotoTaken - Trial: 9 days left` for as long as the trial has more than a day to run, `PhotoTaken - Trial: 1 day left` on the second-to-last day, and `PhotoTaken - Trial: last day` on the final day. A paid copy shows just `PhotoTaken`, with no suffix.

Preferences > License shows the trial instead of a key. During a trial the **License** tab has no license key, no computer label, and no **Deactivate this computer** button, because none of those exist yet. Instead you see:

- A heading with the countdown: **Free trial: 9 days left.**, **Free trial: 1 day left.**, **Free trial: today is the last day.**, or **Your free trial has ended.**
- **Trial email:** the address you started the trial with.
- A note that buying a license keeps your picks, ratings, and settings exactly as they are.

- **Buy PhotoTaken**, which opens the pricing page in your browser, and **Enter license key**, which opens the activation window right there so you can type in a key you just bought. The tab re-draws itself as soon as the activation succeeds, so you can see the license you just entered without closing Preferences.

A reminder appears near the end. With three days or fewer left, PhotoTaken shows a **Trial ending** dialog just after the window opens. It says **Your PhotoTaken trial ends in 3 days.** (or **ends tomorrow.**, or **ends today.**) and offers three buttons.

This dialog is a hub, and only two things close it: **Continue trial**, or entering a key that activates. Everything else brings you back to it, because buying and entering a key are two halves of the same errand.

- **Buy PhotoTaken** opens the pricing page in your browser and leaves this dialog open behind it. When you come back, a new line reads **Finished buying? Enter your license key below.** and **Enter license key** is the highlighted button, ready for the key that just landed in your inbox.
- **Enter license key** opens the activation window straight on the key form. Activate successfully and both windows close. Press **Cancel** there instead and you land back on this dialog, so the **Buy PhotoTaken** button is still in front of you.
- **Continue trial** dismisses it and gets on with your day.

It appears on every launch during those last three days. It used to show at most once a day; the last three days are the stretch worth interrupting for, and one click is a cheap price for not losing your setup on day fifteen.

2a.6 Privacy, security, and what stays on your machine

PhotoTaken's positioning is that your photos stay on your machine. The activation system is designed to honor that promise as strictly as possible.

No account is created. There is no PhotoTaken username or password. The pair of license key plus email is the only credential.

No telemetry, no usage tracking, no heartbeats. The activation server is contacted exactly once on first launch, then never again from this machine. Your day-to-day use of PhotoTaken generates zero outbound traffic to the activation server. (The unrelated **Update Checker** still pings `phototakensoftware.com` to see if a new version exists, and only that; you can turn that off in Preferences if you would like the app fully silent.)

Your hardware identifier never leaves your machine in the clear. What the server actually stores is `sha256(raw_os_id + project_salt)`. The project salt is a 32-byte constant baked into the PhotoTaken binary; it is not a cryptographic secret (anyone who unpacks the installer can read it), but it makes the hash specific to PhotoTaken. Two LorMarSoft products installed on the same machine cannot cross-link a user across products, which matters for the no-telemetry promise.

Your license token is signed. When activation succeeds, the server signs a token with an Ed25519 private key it never shares. PhotoTaken's binary embeds the matching public key (with room for additional keys so the server can rotate its signing key in the future without breaking installed copies) and verifies the signature on every startup. Editing `license.json` by hand to change the email, machine ID, or anything else inside the signed payload breaks the signature and forces re-activation. Editing the un-signed fields (the friendly machine label, the activation date) only messes up the License tab's display; it does not grant any new privilege.

The signed token never expires. A token issued today is valid forever for that combination of license key and machine. There is no requirement that PhotoTaken be online once activation succeeds, and there is no scheduled re-check.

Revoking a license only takes effect on reinstall. If a license is revoked (chargeback, refund), already-running installs keep working until the next reinstall on that machine. This is a deliberate consequence of the no-heartbeat design: there is no daily check that could reach out and turn the app off.

2a.7 Beta tester note

This section applies only to existing beta testers reading this from a beta build. The activation system is shipped dormant in `1.0.0-beta.N` builds and never shows the window. When `1.0.0` (no `-beta` suffix) ships, the system activates. Mark will issue you a permanent free license key at that cutover, matching the promise in the launch materials ("Free for now, lifetime"). You'll receive an email with the key; enter it the first time you launch `1.0.0`, and your beta tester status converts to a lifetime license. Existing testers do not need to take any action before the 1.0.0 cutover; just keep using your current beta build and watch your inbox.

3. Your first session

This chapter walks you through the first time you launch PhotoTaken. The goal is to get you oriented to the app's mental model, the workspace, how folders work, how tagging works, so later chapters can focus on details instead of reintroducing basics.

Launch

Launch PhotoTaken (double-click `PhotoTaken.exe` on Windows, or open `PhotoTaken` from Applications / the Dock on Mac). A small card with the PhotoTaken logo appears right away. This is the loading splash: while it is up, PhotoTaken is scanning your favorite folders, reopening the folders you had open last time, and warming its caches. On a machine with many favorites or a large photo library that work can take a few seconds, so the splash gives you immediate confirmation that your double-click registered (without it, an empty screen during the wait makes it easy to think the app did not start, so you double-click again). The card shows a "Loading your photo library..." status line, matches your Light or Dark theme, and closes by itself the instant the main window is ready. You never need to dismiss it.

The main window then appears, and on top of it a small dialog titled **Favorites**.

PhotoTaken uses a concept of **favorite drives and folders**, the roots of the folder tree on the left side of the window. On first launch this list is empty, so the Favorites dialog opens automatically to get you started.

Adding your first favorite

Click **Add...** and pick where your photos live. Common choices:

- The root of your external photo drive (e.g. `D:\`).
- A specific library folder (e.g. `C:\Users\you\Pictures`).
- A UNC path to a NAS (e.g. `\\server\photos`).
- A single shoot folder if you're just exploring the app.

You can add several favorites, each appears as a separate root in the Favorite Favorite Folders panel. Click **OK** to close the Favorites dialog. The roots you added now populate the **Favorite Folders** panel down the left side of the window.

You can change favorites any time later via the **Favorites...** button on the toolbar. The Favorites dialog supports Add, Remove, and reordering.

Opening a folder

In the **Favorite Folders** panel, expand one of your favorite roots until you find a folder with photos in it. Click that folder.

Three things happen at once:

1. The folder's thumbnails start streaming into the central **contact sheet**.
2. The folder is added to the **Tabs** strip (to the right of the Favorite Folders panel, unless you've moved it) so you can switch back and forth quickly.
3. The folder name displays in a header row above the contact sheet.

Thumbnails appear progressively as they decode; the UI stays responsive the whole time. The thumbnails for the tiles currently on screen are built first, and the rest fill in behind them as decode capacity frees up, so even a very large folder shows you the visible screen quickly instead of grinding from the top down; scrolling re-prioritizes so the tiles you scroll to jump ahead of off-screen rows. (On Windows this also softens the first-open cost of antivirus scanning, since only the photos you can see are read up front rather than the whole folder at once.) The first time you open a folder of, say, five thousand RAW files, building every thumbnail may take a minute or two depending on disk speed, and the **Generating thumbnails** progress bar in the status bar, bottom right, tracks that work. The words and count sit just to the left of the bar rather than on top of it, so they stay readable. The second time you open it, it's near-instant: PhotoTaken caches thumbnails on disk and rehydrates the grid from a folder snapshot cache. On a fully-cached revisit no progress bar appears, because every thumbnail is reloaded from the cache rather than decoded again. If you leave a folder partway through its first decode and come back before it's finished, the bar resumes from where it left off (for example 300 of 1000 and climbing) rather than restarting at one of however many are left, so a revisit continues the same job instead of looking like it began again. The count always reflects the whole folder, with the thumbnails already on disk credited as done. It sits in the status bar rather than above the grid so that the photos never shift position as it appears and disappears, which matters when an edit causes a handful of thumbnails to be rebuilt. It is a filling bar rather than plain text so that work in progress is obvious at a glance.

Cloud (online-only) photos

If your photos sit in a folder that a cloud service manages, many of them may be kept **online-only**: the file name and a placeholder are on your computer, but the actual photo lives in the cloud until something opens it. File Explorer (Windows) or Finder (Mac) marks these with a cloud icon. This is the default for a lot of accounts, and it is why your Pictures folder can look full while taking almost no disk space. PhotoTaken recognizes online-only files from **OneDrive**,

Dropbox, and Google Drive on Windows, and from **iCloud Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive, and Google Drive on Mac**: modern Windows and macOS both funnel every cloud provider through one shared placeholder mechanism, so a single check covers them all.

The catch for any photo app is that reading even one byte of an online-only file makes the operating system download the whole thing. If PhotoTaken read every online-only file the moment you opened the folder, to decode a thumbnail, to read its ratings and keywords, to show its EXIF, it would quietly pull your entire cloud library down to your disk, which could be hundreds of gigabytes. So it doesn't read them at all. Instead, an online-only photo is listed as a tile with a small **cloud badge** in place of a preview, and nothing is downloaded. Its star rating and color label still show (those come from PhotoTaken's local cache, not from reading the file), and selecting it shows "(cloud file, not downloaded)" in the Metadata panel instead of reading the file. Search follows the same rule: an online-only photo can be found by its file name straight away, and by camera, lens, date, and the other details read from inside the file once it has been downloaded and its folder opened again.

You fetch a cloud photo only when you actually want it:

- **Double-click** the tile. On Windows PhotoTaken downloads that one file and opens it in one step, the same "download, then open" behavior you would see in Photo Mechanic or by double-clicking in Explorer. On Mac it downloads the file (the badge is replaced by the real preview when it lands); double-click again to open it in the viewer, see the macOS note below.
- **Right-click a selection** and choose **Download from cloud** to pull down several at once without opening each. The **Generating thumbnails** bar tracks the downloads.

Photos you have marked **Always keep on this device** (or the equivalent "keep downloaded" option in your cloud app) are already local, so they carry no cloud badge and behave like any other file. This handling works on both Windows and Mac (it keys off the file's online-only marker: the cloud attribute on Windows, and on macOS either Apple's "dataless" flag for iCloud / OneDrive / Google Drive or Dropbox's own 0-byte placeholder); folders on a normal local drive are never affected. Reaching a OneDrive-backed Pictures folder in the first place is made easier by the **Go to > Pictures** shortcut in the folder picker (see Chapter 7), which resolves to wherever OneDrive actually keeps it.

Downloads themselves are silent on macOS: PhotoTaken pulls a Mac cloud file down through the system's own cloud-file read mechanism, so nothing pops open and no other app launches.

Real previews on cloud tiles. A bare cloud badge tells you a photo is there but not what it looks like, so by default PhotoTaken shows a real preview instead: it asks the operating system for the thumbnail the cloud already keeps, the same preview Finder or File Explorer shows, and

paints it on the tile with a small cloud badge in the corner so you still know it's online-only. This never downloads the file (it only fetches the small cloud thumbnail), and double-clicking still downloads the full photo as before. It works on **Windows (OneDrive)** and on **Mac for iCloud Drive** (and the other Apple File Provider clouds), including online-only RAW files, which preview from the camera's embedded JPEG without pulling the full RAW. The one exception is **Dropbox on Mac**, whose online-only files are empty placeholders with nothing to preview; those still show the plain cloud badge until you download them. Because the preview leans on system components that vary by machine, it has an off switch: **Preferences > Performance > Show previews for online-only cloud photos**. If previews don't appear or anything looks off, turn it off and you're back to the plain cloud badge with no loss of function. Toggling the setting refreshes the open folder right away, and the **Generating thumbnails** bar tracks the previews as they load.

A quick tour of the interface

Take a minute to hover and click around. Here's what you're looking at, from outside in:

Top: toolbar. On the left: the PhotoTaken logo (click it to open the About dialog), a light/dark theme toggle, **Favorites**, **Compare**, **Slideshow**, **Close Tab** (Ctrl/Cmd+W), **Reopen Closed Tab** (Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+T). In the middle: **Ingest**, **Manage Stationery Pads**, **Apply Stationery Pad**, **Edit IPTC Info** (Ctrl/Cmd+I). On the right: the three panel toggles, **Folders**, **Tabs**, **Metadata**, plus **Preferences** (Ctrl/Cmd+), a **Keyboard Shortcuts** button (the keyboard icon, which pops up the same cheat sheet as the ? key), and **Help** (F1). The keyboard button and the Help button sit next to each other but do different things: the keyboard icon shows the quick shortcut cheat sheet, while the question-mark Help icon opens the full guide.

Left: Favorite Folders panel. Your favorites and their subfolders, lazy-loaded so a drive with thousands of folders doesn't freeze the UI on expansion.

Left (next to Folders): Tabs strip. A vertical list of folders you've opened this session. Click any tab to switch; the active tab is highlighted. Close a tab with its **x** button or Ctrl/Cmd+W.

Center: contact sheet. The thumbnail grid. Above it, a row of filters (Color, Rating), a sort dropdown, a Display dropdown, the size slider, and a size dropdown. Below it, nothing, the grid fills the vertical space.

Right: Metadata panel. EXIF and IPTC details for the currently-selected image. When nothing is selected, the panel is empty.

Bottom: status bar. Shows total image count for the active folder, number of visible images if a filter is active, and number of selected images when you have a selection.

Any of the three side panels can be dragged to the opposite side, collapsed, or hidden entirely using its toolbar toggle. Your layout saves on quit and restores next launch.

Try a basic workflow

With a folder open in front of you, try this five-minute sequence. It touches the essential verbs the rest of the app is built on.

1. Navigate the grid. Click a thumbnail to select it. Arrow keys move the selection. Shift+click or Shift+arrow extends the selection to a range. Ctrl/Cmd+click toggles individual tiles in or out of a selection.

2. Open the viewer. Press **Enter** (or double-click a thumbnail). The full-size image takes over the window with a thin info bar across the bottom. Use the **Left** and **Right** arrows (or the mouse wheel) to move between images. Press **Esc** to return to the grid.

3. Tag an image. With the viewer open or back in the grid, press a digit from **1** to **5** to set a star rating. Press **0** to clear it. Press **R** to apply a red color tag, **G** for green, **B** for blue. The tag appears as a small overlay on the thumbnail. Press **** (backslash) to clear a color. The full keyboard reference is in Chapter 27.

4. See the metadata. Close the viewer with **Esc** to return to the grid. Select the image you just tagged. The Metadata panel on the right fills with capture information, date, camera, lens, ISO, shutter, aperture, GPS, and more. Fields the camera didn't record render blank, not as "None" or "Unknown".

5. Rename the image. Right-click the thumbnail and choose **Rename....** Type a new name and press OK. If the image had a RAW sibling (e.g. a matching **.NEF**), both files renamed in lockstep. The new name shows under the thumbnail and in the metadata panel.

6. Delete the image. Press **Delete**. A confirmation dialog lists what will be removed. Click **Yes**. The file moves to the Recycle Bin and the Recycle Bin sound plays. Press **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** to restore it, the tile comes right back in the grid with the rating and color tag still applied.

That's the core loop. Everything else in the app is a more specialized version of one of those six operations.

What just got saved on disk

Two things happened on disk during that workflow that are worth understanding early:

- **XMP tags.** Your rating and color tag were written to the file's internal XMP (for JPEG, TIFF, and PNG) or to an adjacent `.xmp` sidecar (for RAW). Open the file in Lightroom, Bridge, Photo Mechanic, or any XMP-aware tool and you'll see the same rating and label. If you move the file to another computer, the tags travel with it automatically.
- **Tag cache.** A small file named `_shootdesk_tags.json` appeared in the folder. It mirrors what's in XMP so the next time you open the folder, PhotoTaken can paint the tags on the grid instantly without waiting for ExifTool to read every file. You don't need to back this file up; it rebuilds from XMP automatically if deleted. See Chapter 12 Rating and color tagging for the full story.

Quitting

Close the window (the **x** button or **Alt+F4**). PhotoTaken asks "Are you sure you want to quit?", click Yes. Before exiting, the app saves:

- Window size and position, and which monitor it was on.
- Which docks are open and which side they're on.
- The theme you had set.
- The active folder and every open tab.
- Your folder-tree expansion state.
- Anything staged for **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** undo gets flushed to the actual Recycle Bin at this point, since the undo stage is deliberately session-scoped.

Relaunch the app. You'll find exactly the same window layout and folders open, so you can pick up where you left off.

Where to next

You've now used every major verb the app exposes. The rest of the manual goes deep on each one:

- If you haven't ingested a card yet, jump to Chapter 11 Ingesting from a card.
- If you want to understand how tags survive across Lightroom and Photo Mechanic, read Chapter 12 Rating and color tagging.
- If you have a mountain of shots from last weekend to cull, Chapter 13 The viewer through Chapter 16 Filtering the contact sheet cover the culling loop end to end.

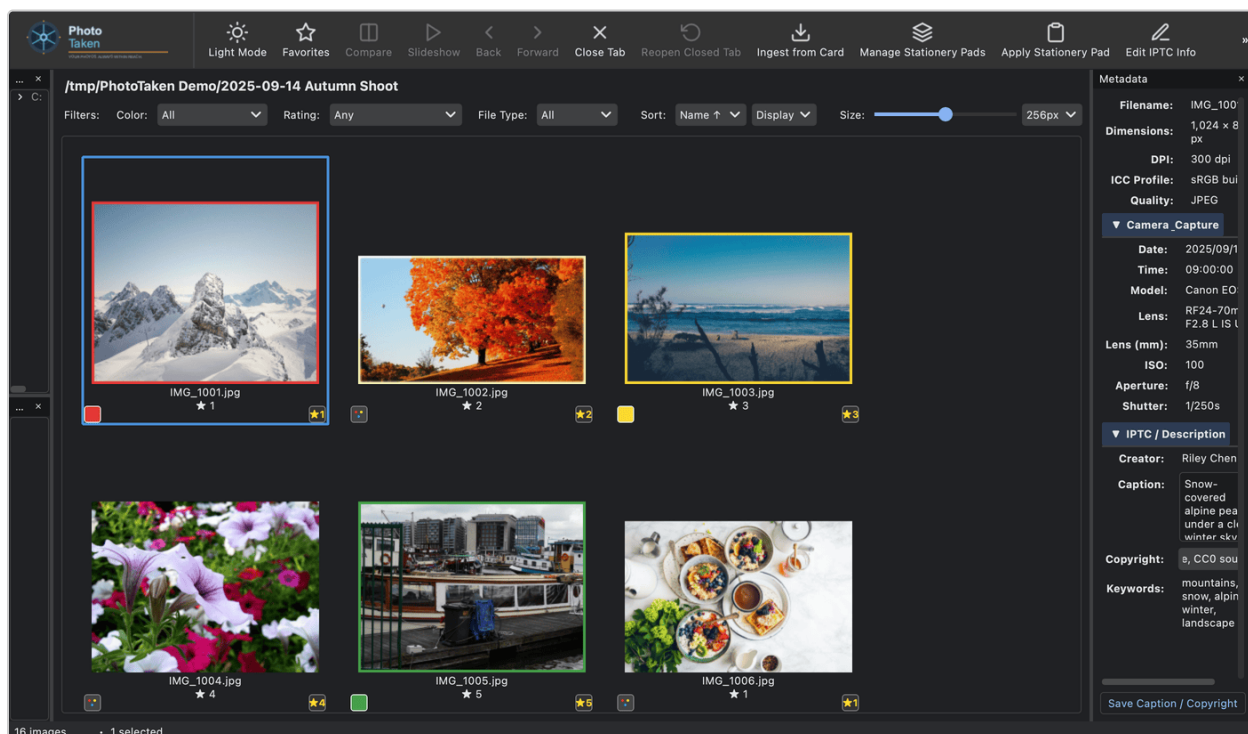
- If you want to see every keyboard shortcut at a glance, flip to Chapter 27 Keyboard shortcuts.

Any link above that takes you to an italicized one-line summary points at a chapter that hasn't been filled in yet, check the git log on this file for progress.

Part II, The workspace

4. Main window tour

The PhotoTaken main window has five regions: the toolbar, the central contact sheet, three dockable side panels (Folders, Tabs, Metadata), and the status bar. This chapter walks each region top to bottom. Panel-specific behavior gets its own chapter later; here we're just naming parts and explaining how they fit together.



The PhotoTaken main window: folders, contact sheet, and panels.

The toolbar

The toolbar runs along the top of the window. It's fixed, it can't be moved or detached, and its buttons are grouped by purpose into left, middle, and right clusters.

When the window is too narrow for every button. The toolbar carries a lot, so on a smaller window the buttons that don't fit move into an overflow menu behind a » button at the right-hand end. Click it and they drop down as an ordinary menu: the same icons and labels, the same grouping separators, checkmarks on the panel toggles, and greyed-out entries for

anything currently unavailable. It stays open until you pick something, click elsewhere, or press Esc, and you can walk it with the arrow keys. Widen the window and the buttons move back onto the toolbar; the » disappears once everything fits. If you would rather see every button at once on a smaller window, turn on **Preferences > General > Show toolbar as icons only**: without labels the whole toolbar fits comfortably, and each button's name still appears as a tooltip on hover.

Left cluster, navigation and view modes:

- **PhotoTaken logo.** Click to open the **About** dialog, which shows the running version, company info (LorMarSoft, LLC), and copyright. The logo image swaps between a light-on-dark variant and a dark-on-light variant depending on theme. The logo also names what you are running, in amber in its upper right: **Trial**, **Light**, or **Pro**. Hovering it says the same thing in words. A beta build shows no word there, because the version number already ends in `-beta.N`.
- **Light Mode / Dark Mode toggle.** Flips the theme immediately. The icon shows a sun in dark mode (click to switch to light) and a moon in light mode (click to switch to dark), both the icon and the label always describe the destination, not the current state. See Chapter 6.
- **Grid Lines.** A toggle (it stays pressed while on) for the separator lines between thumbnails. On by default. Keyboard shortcut: **!** with the grid focused. It edits the same setting as **Preferences > Thumbnails > Grid Lines**, so all three always agree: flip it any one way and the other two follow. The line color and thickness live in Preferences; the button and the key are just the on/off. **!** is scoped to the thumbnail grid, so typing an exclamation mark into the Search box types the character rather than flipping the lines (the same arrangement as **?** for the cheat sheet). A letter key was not an option here: nearly every one is already a color tag. See the Grid Lines group under Preferences > Thumbnails.
- **Favorites...** Opens the Favorites dialog to add, remove, or reorder the roots that appear in the Favorite Favorite Folders panel. See Chapter 7.
- **Find Photo Folders...** ♦ Opens the Find Photo Folders window, which scans the drives you choose and lists every folder that holds photos. See Find Photo Folders.
- **Compare.** Opens the two-image side-by-side viewer. Enabled only when exactly two thumbnails are selected. Keyboard shortcut: **C**. See Chapter 14.
- **Slideshow.** Starts a slideshow on the current selection. Enabled when two or more thumbnails are selected. Keyboard shortcut: **F5**. See Chapter 15.
- **Back / Forward.** Step backward and forward through the tabs you've visited this session, the same way a web browser tracks pages. Keyboard shortcuts: **Alt/Option+Left** / **Alt/Option+Right**. If your mouse has the two side buttons under the thumb, those work too. The buttons enable themselves only when there's somewhere to go. Hitting Back also resurrects a tab you closed: close a folder, hit Back, and that folder reopens at the top of the strip. See Chapter 8 for a full walkthrough.

- **Close Tab.** Closes the active tab. Keyboard shortcut: **Ctrl/Cmd+W**.
- **Reopen Closed Tab.** Reopens the most recently closed tab. Enabled when at least one tab has been closed this session. Keyboard shortcut: **Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+T**. Up to ten closed tabs are remembered.

Middle cluster, ingest and metadata:

- **Ingest.** Opens the Ingest dialog to copy photos off a card or folder onto your working drive (optionally with a simultaneous backup copy). See Chapter 11.
- **Manage Stationery Pads...** ♦ Opens the Stationery Pads manager dialog where you create, edit, duplicate, and delete reusable IPTC metadata templates. See Chapter 20.
- **Apply Stationery Pad...** ♦ Stamps one of your saved pads onto the current selection. Enabled when at least one thumbnail is selected. See Chapter 20.
- **Edit IPTC Info...** Opens the full IPTC editor for the current selection. Keyboard shortcut: **Ctrl/Cmd+I**. Enabled when at least one thumbnail is selected. See Chapter 19.
- **Edit EXIF Info...** ♦ Opens the EXIF capture-metadata editor (date/time, lens, GPS) for the current selection. Keyboard shortcut: **Ctrl/Cmd+E**. Enabled when at least one thumbnail is selected. See Chapter 19a.
- **Print...** ♦ Opens the Print Image dialog (orientation, fit-to-page vs. actual size, optional filename caption) with a live Preview button, followed by the system print dialog when you click **Print....** Keyboard shortcut: **Ctrl/Cmd+P**. Enabled when at least one thumbnail is highlighted. See Chapter 24a.
- **Print Contact Sheet...** ♦ Opens the Contact Sheet print dialog (columns, label options, print scope) with a live Preview button, followed by the system print dialog when you click **Print....** Keyboard shortcut: **Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+P**. Enabled whenever the contact sheet has visible images. See Chapter 24a.

Right cluster, help then workspace:

- **Preferences...** Opens the Preferences dialog. Keyboard shortcut: **Ctrl/Cmd+,**. See Chapter 26.
- **Keyboard Shortcuts.** Opens the shortcut reference.
- **Help.** Opens the in-app F1 Help dialog, a tight version of this manual. A **Contents** pane on the left lists every chapter and subsection so you can jump straight to a topic (the entry for where you've scrolled highlights as you read), and a search box at the top finds any phrase. Keyboard shortcut: **F1**.
- **Folders / Tabs / Metadata / Keywords toggles.** Show or hide each of the four side docks. A button lit up means the dock is visible; unlit means hidden. The panel toggles sit at the very end of the toolbar, so the row finishes with the controls for your workspace. See Chapter 5.

The search row

Search has a **row of its own**, directly under the toolbar:

- **Search box.** Wide, because a real query is long. Type one and press **Enter** (or focus from anywhere with **Ctrl/Cmd+F**) to open a Search Results tab. Plain words match filename, keywords, and descriptive fields (plus any other metadata value as a catch-all), a date typed as `July 2013` or `July 4, 2013` matches when the photo was taken, and operators like `camera: , iso:>3200 , or type:raw` narrow further. Not sure of the syntax? Use the **Filters** button beside the box to build a query from field/operator/value rows instead.
- **Filters.** ♦ Builds a query from field/operator/value rows. See Chapter 16.
- **Search.** Runs whatever is in the search box. Its label names where it will look (**Search This Folder** / **Search Open Folders** / **Search Everything** ♦); the arrow beside it changes that and the choice sticks between launches. Greyed while the box is empty. See Chapter 16, Searching across folders.

It gets its own row because the toolbar is already full: sharing a row, the two together needed more width than a normal window has, and whatever didn't fit got pushed into the toolbar's overflow (») menu, search box included. On its own row the search controls are always there, at any window size.

The toolbar buttons are icons with text labels; hovering shows a tooltip with the full action name on the first line and the keyboard shortcut on a second line, for example **Compare** above **C**, or **Print Contact Sheet** above **Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+P**, on macOS the shortcut renders with the platform's native modifier glyphs (**⌘P**, **⌘ ↑ P**). Buttons that have no shortcut just show their label. You can't rearrange the toolbar or change which buttons it shows.

If the toolbar feels crowded, **Preferences > General > Show toolbar as icons only** hides the labels, each button shrinks down to just its icon, and the label still appears as a tooltip when you hover. The setting is remembered.

The contact sheet

The central area of the window is the **contact sheet**, a grid of thumbnails for the active folder. Just above the grid, a filter row holds the Color filter, Rating filter, Sort dropdown, Display dropdown, thumbnail Size slider, and a size dropdown. Just above the filter row, a header line shows the active folder's name.

Chapter 9 covers the contact sheet in detail: sizing, sorting, display fields, selection, keyboard navigation.

The four side docks

Docked to the edges of the window are four panels:

- **Folders**, a tree of your favorite drives and their subfolders. See Chapter 7.
- **Tabs**, a vertical list of folders you currently have open. See Chapter 8.
- **Metadata**, EXIF and IPTC details for the currently-selected image. See Chapter 17 and Chapter 18.
- **Keywords**, your own tree of keywords, for tagging and searching. See Chapter 5a.

Each dock can sit on the left or right side of the window, can be resized, can be collapsed as a stacked tab, or hidden entirely. Chapter 5 covers the dock model in depth.

The status bar

Running along the bottom of the window is the status bar. In a typical session it shows three pieces of information, left to right:

- **Image count.** How many images are in the active folder (all images, not just visible). For example `3,218 images`.
- **Visible count.** If a filter is active (Color or Rating), shows how many images are currently visible. For example `• 412 visible`. When no filter is active, this section is blank.
- **Selection count.** When you have at least one image selected, shows the count. For example `• 47 selected`. Goes blank when you clear the selection.

Temporary messages also appear in the status bar during long operations, "Saving IPTC changes to 52 file(s)...", "Converted 14 of 50...", and so on. These clear themselves after the operation finishes.

Window behaviors

A few things about the window itself that you'll notice across every session:

Window size and position persist. Resize the window, move it to your second monitor, maximize it, all of that saves on quit and restores next launch.

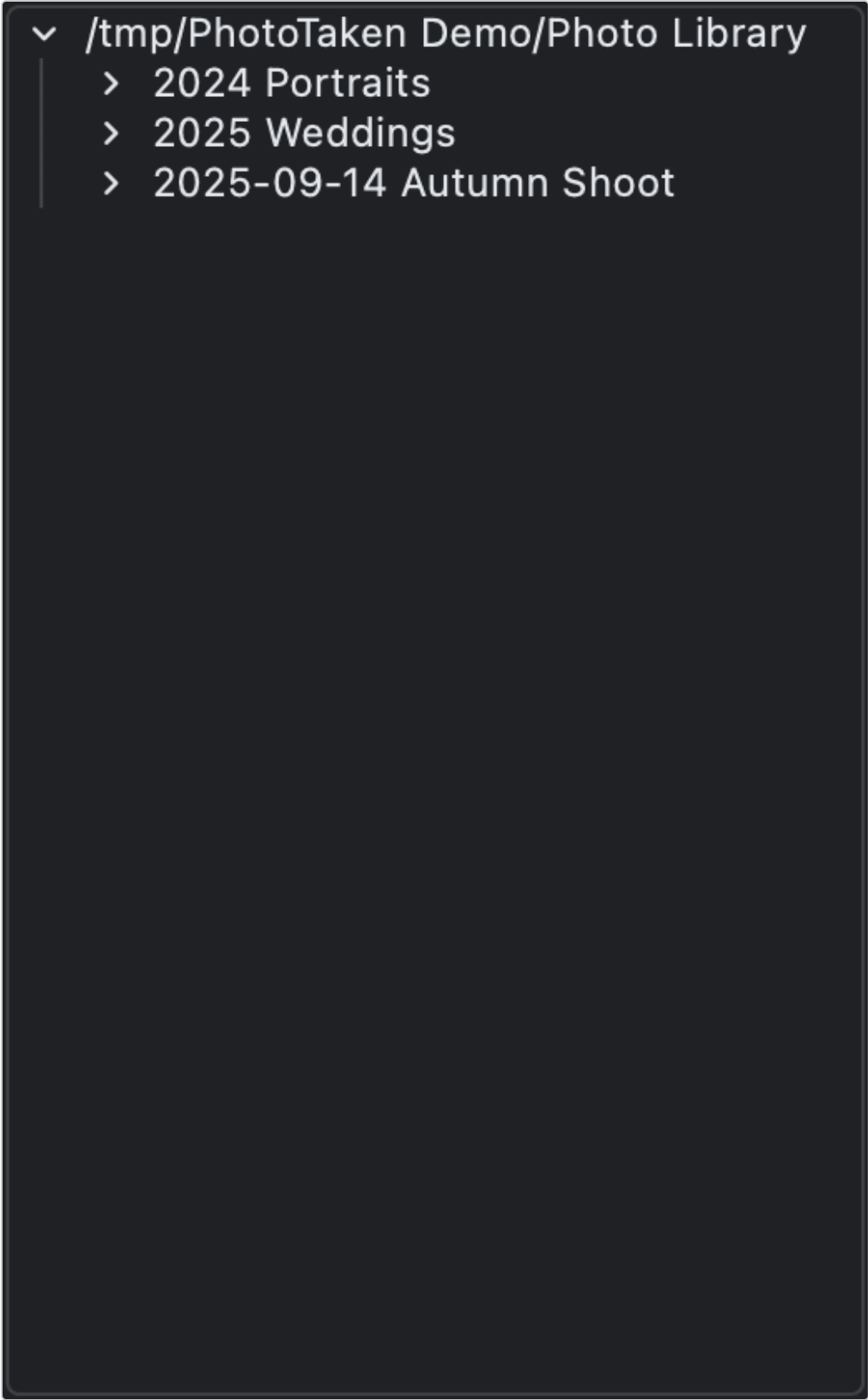
The quit confirmation. Closing the window (× button, Alt+F4) opens a short "Are you sure you want to quit?" confirmation. The confirmation is intentional, misfiring the × button mid-cull would be expensive. Click **Yes** to quit, **No** to keep the app open.

HiDPI handling. PhotoTaken is tested at 100%, 125%, 150%, and 200% display scaling, and on multi-monitor setups where monitors have different DPIs. Moving the window between monitors rescales cleanly without requiring a restart.

Nothing floats. PhotoTaken doesn't spawn secondary top-level windows; dialogs (Preferences, Favorites, Ingest, Stationery Pads, etc.) are modal and attached to the main window. You never have to hunt for a lost PhotoTaken window on another monitor.

5. Docks and layout

PhotoTaken's three side panels, **Folders**, **Tabs**, **Metadata**, are dockable widgets in Qt's docking framework, not plain columns. That means you can reshape the window to fit how you work, and the shape persists across sessions. This chapter explains the dock model and the common layouts.

- 
- ✓ /tmp/PhotoTaken Demo/Photo Library
 - 2024 Portraits
 - 2025 Weddings
 - 2025-09-14 Autumn Shoot

The folder tree panel, with a favorite expanded to show subfolders.

The four panels at a glance

- **Folders.** A tree of your favorite drives and their subfolders. Primary job: navigate.
- **Tabs.** A vertical strip of folders currently open. Primary job: switch between folders already loaded. Intentionally vertical rather than a horizontal tab bar, it stacks cleanly against the side of the window and doesn't eat vertical grid space.
- **Metadata.** EXIF and IPTC detail for the selected image, plus the inline Caption and Copyright editor. Primary job: inspect and annotate.
- **Keywords.** Your own tree of keywords. Primary job: tag a whole branch with one click, keep one spelling of every word you use, and find the photos you filed under it. Hidden until you turn it on.

Where a dock can go

Docks are restricted to the **left** and **right** edges of the main window. They cannot dock at the top or bottom. This restriction is deliberate: the contact sheet needs the full vertical space in the middle, and horizontal docks would squeeze the grid into a stripe.

Moving a dock

Drag a dock's title bar to move it:

- **Same side, different stack position.** Drop above or below another dock on the same side to reorder.
- **Other side.** Drop on the opposite edge of the window. The dock switches sides.
- **Stacked with another dock.** Drop on top of another dock (they overlap) to stack them as tabs, sharing the same screen region. A tab strip appears at the bottom of the combined dock, click each tab to switch which dock is on top.

Dropping somewhere that's not a valid docking zone cancels the drag, the dock springs back to where it came from. A subtle docking-target highlight appears as you drag so you can see which edge Qt is offering.

Resizing a dock

Hover the divider between a dock and the central contact sheet. The cursor becomes a resize cursor; drag to widen or narrow. Width is per-dock, per-side, and persists across sessions. A minimum dock width keeps the panel's contents readable, you can't squeeze a dock down to invisible.

Hiding vs. stacking

Each dock has three visibility states:

- **Visible.** Dock is shown, panel contents render in full.
- **Hidden.** Dock is not in the window at all. Toggle via the matching toolbar button (**Folders / Tabs / Metadata**) or its keyboard shortcut: **Ctrl/Cmd+1** for Favorite Folders, **Ctrl/Cmd+2** for Tabs, **Ctrl/Cmd+3** for Metadata. The dock's remembered position, side, and width restore when you re-show it.
- **Stacked.** When two docks share the same region, only one is on top at a time; the other is stacked behind it. Click the tab at the bottom of the stacked region to switch which is visible.

Common layouts

- **Default four-column.** Folders on the left, Tabs below Folders on the left, Metadata on the right, contact sheet in the middle. This is how the app opens on first launch.
- **Maximum grid.** Hide all three docks via their toolbar toggles. The contact sheet fills the window. Good for a pure cull session where you only want thumbnails visible.
- **Single-column left stack.** Folders and Metadata both on the left, stacked as tabs. Tabs strip on the right. Useful on narrow laptop screens.
- **Inspector-heavy.** Metadata on the right, everything else hidden. Good for tagging delivery metadata when you already know which folder you're in.

You can always drag a hidden dock back by toggling it on; the toggle re-shows the dock where it last lived.

Persistence

All dock state saves on quit and restores on launch:

- Which side each dock is on.
- Each dock's width.
- Whether each dock is visible or hidden.
- Which dock is on top in a stacked group.

The state is stored as base64-encoded Qt layout blobs inside `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\settings.json` (see Appendix B), so it survives app updates and travels with your user profile.

Resetting the layout

There's no explicit "Reset Layout" button. If your layout feels wrong, say, you dragged a dock off-screen onto an external monitor that's no longer connected, you have two options:

- **Cheap fix:** Hide and re-show each dock via its toolbar toggle. Each re-show snaps the dock back to a valid spot within the current window, which is usually enough to reclaim an unreachable one.
- **Last resort:** Quit, delete `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\settings.json`, relaunch. You'll get default layout, default favorites, and default everything-else, so this is more drastic than most layout problems need.

Preferences → Panels

The **Panels** tab in Preferences (see Chapter 26) offers the same controls the toolbar toggles and drags do, but as a single form: a **Side** dropdown (Left / Right) and a **Visible** checkbox for each of the three docks. Useful when you want to reconfigure the whole layout without opening and closing individual docks.

5a. The Keywords panel

Keywords are how you find a photo months later, when you no longer remember which shoot it came from. The Keywords panel is where you keep the words you use, so they stay spelled one way and you stop retyping them.

The panel is hidden until you ask for it: press **Ctrl/Cmd+4**, click the **Keywords** button at the end of the toolbar, or turn it on in **Preferences** → **Panels**. It starts empty, because the tree is yours to build.

Building the tree

Right-click anywhere in the panel to add a word. With a word selected you can add another **under** it or **alongside** it, so **Animals** can hold **Birds**, and **Birds** can hold **Owl**. The **Add**, **Rename** and **Delete** buttons along the bottom do the same thing.

Nesting is not filing for its own sake. A word's position is what lets one click tag a photo with the whole branch, so a photo tagged **Owl** also carries **Animals** and **Birds** and turns up when you search for either.

Two words in the same place cannot share a name, capitals aside, so you cannot end up with both **Egret** and **egret** sitting side by side. Renaming a word carries everything under it along. Deleting one asks first, and tells you how many words are underneath.

Deleting a word **changes your list only**. Keywords already written into photos are left exactly as they are.

Finding things

Type in the **Filter** box to narrow the tree. Matching words stay, along with the branches they hang from, and everything opens up so nothing hides in a collapsed folder. Clear the box to get the whole tree back.

The number on the right of each row is how many photos in your search index carry that word. It counts the word itself, so **Owl** under **Animals > Birds** and an **Owl** filed anywhere else share one number. Only folders you have opened are counted, since those are the ones that have been indexed.

Hover a row and the number gives way to an **arrow**. Click it to search for that word. It runs a keyword: search, which matches keywords only, so you get the photos you actually filed under the word rather than every file whose name or caption happens to contain it.

Tagging photos ◆

Select some photos and every row grows a checkbox. It is a readout as much as a control:

- **Ticked**, every selected photo carries that word.
- **A dash**, some do.
- **Empty**, none do.

So the panel answers "what is already on these?" without you opening anything else.

Click an empty box and the word goes on, **along with everything above it**. Ticking Owl under Animals > Birds writes all three words, which is what makes a later search for "birds" find your owl photo even though you never typed that word. Hold **Shift** while clicking to write the single word instead.

Unticking takes off **only the word you clicked**. Unticking Owl leaves Animals and Birds alone, because another photo in the selection may still need them, and PhotoTaken will not remove a keyword you did not point at. To take those off too, untick them as well.

Writing happens in the background, so the app stays responsive on a big selection. If any file cannot be written, PhotoTaken tells you which ones; the usual reasons are a read-only file, a disconnected drive, or the file being open in another program.

Tagging photos is a **Pro** feature. On Light you can still build your tree, filter it, see the counts, and search.

Ungrouped

With photos selected, any keyword they carry that is **not** in your tree appears under a heading called **Ungrouped** at the bottom of the panel. On a library you have been keywording for years, this is where all of it shows up the first time you open the panel.

To file one, add the same word to your tree. It moves out of Ungrouped as soon as the tree knows it. Your photos are not touched by this; you are organizing your own list, not editing files.

Very large selections

Reading thousands of files just to draw checkboxes would make the panel sluggish, so past 500 selected photos PhotoTaken checks the first 500 and says so above the tree. Ticking a box still applies the keyword to **every** photo you selected, not just the sample.

6. Theme

PhotoTaken ships with two themes: a **dark** theme optimized for a typical editing room, and a **light** theme optimized for bright environments. Dark is the default.

Switching themes

Three equivalent ways to switch:

- Click the **Light Mode** or **Dark Mode** button on the toolbar. The icon shows a sun in dark mode and a moon in light mode; both icon and label describe what you'd switch to, not the current state.
- Open **Preferences** (Ctrl/Cmd+,) and pick the theme from the **General** tab.
- No keyboard shortcut, themes switch rarely enough that one wasn't worth a key.

The change applies immediately, with no restart and no repaint flicker. Your choice saves in `settings.json` and is restored on the next launch.

What's themed

- Window backgrounds, panel backgrounds, menu backgrounds.
- Text color and disabled-text color.
- Button, input, and list-item styles.
- Selection highlight color.
- The PhotoTaken logo in the toolbar, a light-on-dark version in dark mode, dark-on-light in light mode.
- Color-tag swatches shown next to thumbnails and in the Color filter dropdown.

What's not themed

- **Thumbnail images.** A thumbnail is always rendered on a neutral dark-gray background regardless of theme, so the embedded JPEG's colors show faithfully. Lightroom, Photo Mechanic, and Capture One all do this for the same reason: a white UI background would bias your perception of the image's whites, and a full-black background would hide shadows.
- **Image viewer.** The full-size viewer uses the same neutral dark background as thumbnails. Same reasoning.

- **Dialog icons.** The Windows standard information / warning / question icons come from the OS and don't change with the PhotoTaken theme.

When to use which

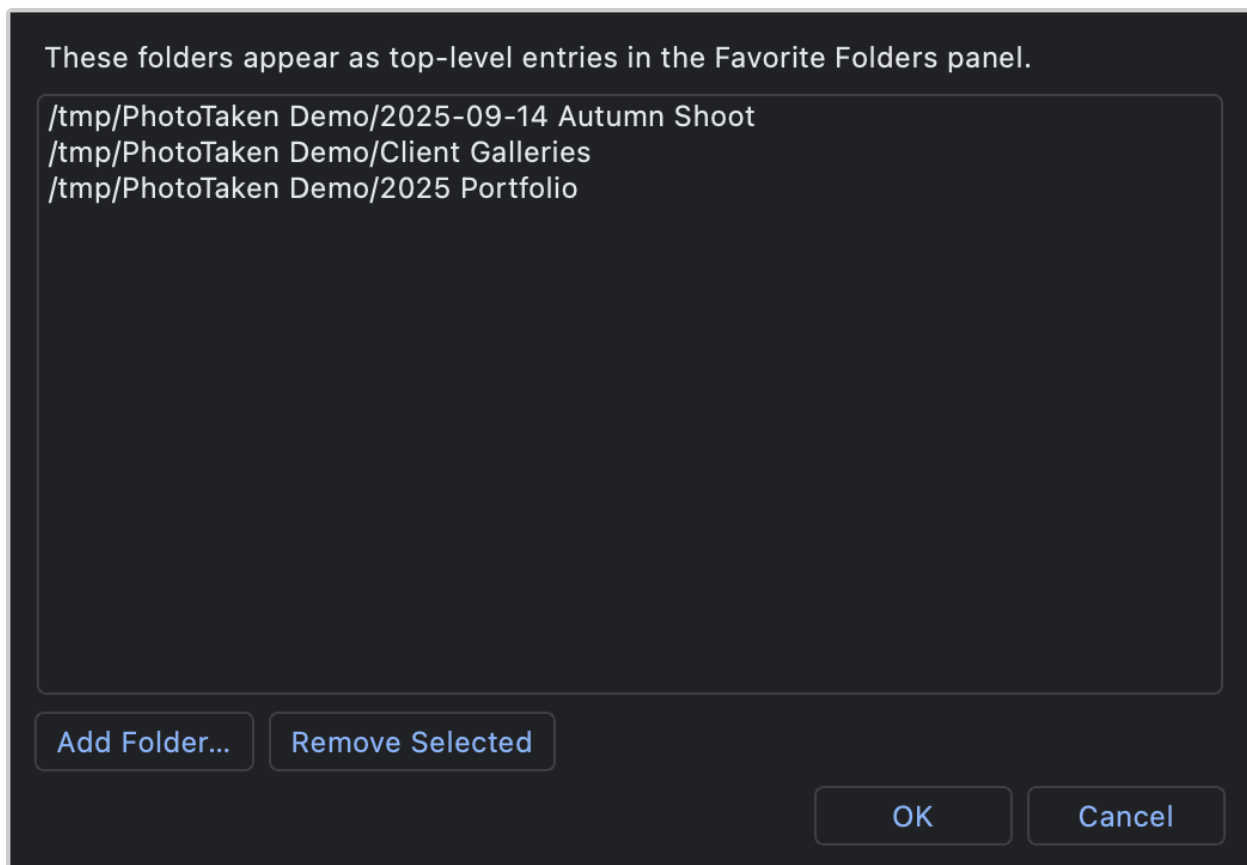
The dark theme is preferable for serious cull sessions because it minimizes bright pixels around the images and keeps your eyes calibrated to the tonality of the thumbnails. The light theme is useful when you're primarily filling out IPTC metadata or reading camera info and just want a brighter, higher-contrast reading surface.

Neither theme changes the actual pixels of your photos, all color management is handled by the display driver and the image's embedded ICC profile, independent of PhotoTaken's UI theme.

Part III, Browsing your photos

7. Favorites and the Favorite Folders panel

The **Favorite Folders panel** is how you navigate into the shoots you want to work on. It's a tree view of your **favorites**, drives, library folders, and shared network locations, each shown as its own root, with their subfolders underneath. This chapter covers how you tell PhotoTaken which places to show, and what you can do with those places once they're on screen.



The Favorite Drives & Folders dialog, with sample folders listed.

What a favorite is

A favorite is just a path, any path Windows understands. PhotoTaken makes no distinction between a drive letter, a local folder, and a UNC path: all of them are just roots that anchor a section of your file system. Typical choices:

- `D:\` , the entire external photo drive.
- `C:\Users\you\Pictures` , the Windows Pictures library.
- `\\nas.local\photos` , a network share on a NAS.
- `E:\Weddings\2026` , a specific library subset, when you want the tree to start deeper.

Each favorite becomes a top-level root in the Favorite Favorite Folders panel. You can have as many as you want; the tree expands and scrolls to accommodate them.

The Favorites dialog

Click **Favorites...** on the toolbar to open the dialog. It has four controls:

- **Add Folder...** opens PhotoTaken's multi-select folder picker so you can choose one or more new paths in a single trip. The picker is a tree view of your filesystem with a path bar at the top: type or paste a path and press Enter to jump there, or expand the tree to find the folder you want. Just below the path bar is a row of **Go to** shortcuts (**Pictures**, **Desktop**, **Downloads**, **Documents**) that jump the tree straight to those standard folders in one click. On Windows this matters more than it sounds: when you sign in with a Microsoft account, Windows often turns on OneDrive "Back up folders," which quietly moves your Pictures folder from `C:\Users\<you>\Pictures` to `C:\Users\<you>\OneDrive\Pictures` and leaves the old folder behind, empty. The **Pictures** shortcut resolves to wherever your real Pictures folder lives now, OneDrive or not, so you never end up staring at an empty folder wondering where your photos went. On a Mac there's a second row, **Cloud**, with one-click jumps to **iCloud Drive** and to any **OneDrive**, **Google Drive**, **Dropbox**, or **Box** you've connected through macOS. These matter even more than the Windows shortcuts: macOS keeps cloud storage inside a hidden system folder (`~/Library/...`) that the drive tree, which starts at `/Volumes` , simply cannot reach, so without the **Cloud** shortcut there is no way to browse to your iCloud Drive at all. Only folders that actually exist on your machine appear as shortcuts, so each row lists just the places you actually use. If you ever need a path the shortcuts don't cover, the path bar also accepts a `~/...` home path and expands it for you. Use Ctrl/Cmd-click to add several siblings to the selection, Shift-click to select a range, and click OK to add them all at once. The picker remembers the parent of the last folder you added, so the next time you click **Add Folder...** it reopens at the same drive root, adding a year's worth of shoot folders is one trip into the picker, not one trip per folder.

- **Find Photo Folders...** ♦ opens a window that scans your drives for folders holding photos, so you can find a shoot you can't place and add it here. See Find Photo Folders below.
- **Remove** deletes the selected favorite. The path on disk is untouched, you're only removing it from PhotoTaken's list.
- **Drag-reorder** on the list rearranges the order in which favorites appear in the Folders tree.

OK applies your changes and saves them to `settings.json`. **Cancel** discards any changes made in the dialog.

You can also skip the Favorites dialog entirely: right-click anywhere in the **Favorite Folders** panel (including the empty placeholder before you've added any) and choose **Add Favorite Folders...** to launch the same picker directly. This is the fastest path on first launch, and a handy shortcut later when you just want to add another drive root or shoot folder without rearranging the existing list.

On the very first launch, PhotoTaken opens the Favorites dialog automatically so you don't land on an empty Favorite Folders panel. You can dismiss it without adding anything; the Favorite Folders panel will just show an empty tree until you add something later.

The Folders tree

Once you have favorites, the Favorite Folders panel shows them as tree roots. A few things to know about how the tree behaves:

Expansion is lazy. Expanding a root doesn't scan every subfolder all the way down, it scans one level at a time. You can expand a drive with tens of thousands of subfolders without freezing the UI.

Selected folder loads the grid. Clicking a folder in the tree loads it into the contact sheet and adds it to the Tabs strip. If you click around quickly between folders, each click starts a fresh load; in-flight scans from the previous folder are cancelled.

Hidden system folders are excluded. PhotoTaken filters out Windows system directories that would only clutter a photographer's tree:

- `$RECYCLE.BIN` and its variants.
- `System Volume Information`.
- `$WinREAgent`.
- Any folder whose name starts with a dot (`.git`, `.thumbnails`, etc.).

If a folder is hidden via NTFS attributes (set via `attrib +H`), it still appears in the tree, only the known-system folders above are filtered by name. The `.phototaken-pending-trash/` directory PhotoTaken creates for Ctrl/Cmd+Z undo staging is also hidden from the tree (see Chapter 23 and Appendix B).

Scroll and expansion state persist. Which roots you had expanded, and where in the tree your scroll position was, are saved on quit and restored on launch. Nothing in this state is synced across computers; it's per-install.

Right-click menu

Right-click any folder in the tree for a context menu with these actions:

- **New Folder...** Creates a subfolder inside the clicked folder. Opens a small prompt for the name. Invalid characters (`\ / : * ? " < > |`) and duplicate-name collisions are caught before the folder is created.
- **Rename Folder...** Renames the clicked folder. Same validation as New Folder. If the folder is open in a tab, the tab label updates automatically. Any subfolders open in other tabs get their paths rewritten to the new parent name. This action is hidden for favorite roots, you can't rename `D:\` via right-click.
- **Delete Folder...** Moves the folder to the Recycle Bin (on local drives) or permanently deletes it (on network paths, with the same warning dialog as file delete). A confirmation dialog lists the folder name before doing anything. Hidden for favorite roots.
- **Refresh** re-scans the folder from disk, picking up any subfolders added, removed, or renamed outside PhotoTaken. Does not collapse your existing expansion state, re-expanded branches stay expanded.
- **Show in Finder / Show in Explorer** opens the OS file manager with the folder selected. The menu label matches the platform, "Show in Finder" on Mac, "Show in Explorer" on Windows. Useful when you need to do something PhotoTaken doesn't offer (Properties / Get Info, zip, move between drives, etc.).
- **Add Favorite Folders...** launches the multi-select folder picker (same dialog as the toolbar's **Favorites...** → **Add Folder...** button) and appends whatever you pick to your favorites list. This entry is also available when you right-click the empty space below the tree, so it works as a bootstrap when you have no favorites yet.
- **Find Photo Folders...** ♦ opens the Find Photo Folders window described at the end of this chapter. It is also offered when you right-click the empty space below the tree.

Drag and drop onto the tree

You can drag files from the contact sheet onto any folder in the tree:

- **Default behavior:** Qt's native drag advertises a move, matching what most photographers expect when dragging inside an app. PhotoTaken shows a Move / Copy / Cancel prompt on drop so there's no ambiguity about what's about to happen.
- **Ctrl/Cmd held while dropping:** forces a copy without asking. Useful when you want to keep the original where it is.

RAW+JPEG pairs (and multi-RAW tiles) are always moved or copied in lockstep, the whole tile travels together so nothing is left orphaned on either end. See Chapter 10 for details on how tiles are composed.

When a file already exists in the destination. If a name you're dropping is already taken in the target folder, PhotoTaken stops and asks, the same way Finder and Explorer do, rather than silently skipping or clobbering it:

- **Replace** overwrites the existing file (and its `.xmp` sidecar) with the one you dragged.
- **Keep Both** leaves the existing file untouched and brings the incoming one in under a numbered suffix, `IMG_0001 (1).jpg`, climbing to `(2)`, `(3)`, and so on if earlier numbers are taken. For a RAW+JPEG pair the *same* number is applied to every file in the set (`IMG_0001 (1).jpg` and `IMG_0001 (1).NEF`) so the pair stays recognised as a pair, and any color, rating, or keyword tags travel to the new name.
- **Cancel** stops the entire drop before any file is moved or copied; nothing on either side is changed.

When a single drop has more than one clash, the prompt shows an **Apply to all N conflicts** checkbox. Tick it before clicking **Replace** or **Keep Both** and that one choice is applied to every remaining clash, so you don't answer the same question file after file. (Cancel always stops the whole operation regardless.)

You can also drag files in from Windows Explorer onto a folder in the tree. Same Move / Copy prompt, same conflict prompt, same pair semantics.

Removing a favorite

The quickest way to remove a top-level favorite is to hover its row in the Favorite Folders panel: a small X appears at the right edge of the row. Click it and PhotoTaken asks you to confirm, with **Cancel** as the default button so an accidental click never removes anything. The X

appears only on top-level favorite rows, not on subfolders below them, and not on the "(no favorites)" placeholder. It also appears on greyed-out favorites whose drive is currently disconnected, so you can clean up a dead entry without reconnecting the drive first.

Removing a favorite by any method only removes the shortcut from PhotoTaken's list. The folder on disk is never touched.

Two other paths reach the same result:

- **Right-click** the favorite in the Favorite Folders panel and choose **Remove from Favorites**. This removes it immediately with no additional confirmation.
- **Favorites... dialog** (toolbar): select the entry in the list and click **Remove**, then OK to save.

When a favorite becomes unreachable

If a favorite points at a drive that's not connected, a UNC path to a server that's offline, or a local folder that has been deleted, PhotoTaken greys out the entry in the Favorite Folders panel and shows a tooltip saying it is currently unavailable. The entry stays in your list and lights back up the moment the drive returns or the share comes back online, without any action on your part.

How the check works. PhotoTaken re-checks every favorite's path on a background thread, about once per minute, and also whenever you switch back to the app window. Running the check off the UI thread is critical for network shares: an on-thread path-existence call over a dead SMB mount can stall the operating system for ten or more seconds, which would lock the main window while you wait. By moving the check to a worker thread, the app stays fully responsive even when a share has gone dark. The checker asks only whether the path resolves to an accessible directory; it does not read any files or list directory contents.

Why nothing is ever removed automatically. From the perspective of a single path-existence check, an unplugged drive and a permanently deleted folder are indistinguishable: the path does not resolve in either case. PhotoTaken cannot determine which situation you are in, so it never removes a favorite on its own. Reconnect the drive and the entry clears on the next check cycle, no re-adding needed.

Removing a dead entry manually. If you know a favorite is gone for good, right-click it in the Favorite Folders panel and choose **Remove from Favorites**. The entry is removed from the panel and from your settings immediately. You can always add the same location back later if circumstances change.

Find Photo Folders ♦

A photographer with several drives and years of shoots rarely remembers where everything is. **Find Photo Folders** scans the drives you choose once, keeps a list of every folder that holds photos, and lets you search that list and add any folder to Favorites with one click. It is a Pro feature.

Opening it. Click **Find Photo Folders...** on the toolbar (just right of **Favorites...**) or in the Favorites dialog, or right-click in the Favorite Folders panel and choose **Find Photo Folders...**. Opened from the toolbar or the panel, the window does not block the rest of the app, so you can keep culling while a large drive is scanned. Opened from the Favorites dialog, anything you add joins that dialog's list and is saved when you click **OK** there.

Choosing where to look. The list at the top holds the drives and folders to scan. **Add Drive or Folder...** opens the same multi-select picker the Favorites dialog uses. A place that has not been scanned yet shows **(not scanned yet)** after its path. **Remove** takes the selected ones off the list; if any of them was scanned, PhotoTaken asks whether to also remove the folders found there (**Remove Folders Too**), leave them in the results (**Keep Folders**), or **Cancel**.

Scanning. The scan button acts on what is selected in that list:

- With a drive selected, it scans only that drive. It reads **Scan** if the drive has never been scanned and **Rescan** if it has.
- With nothing selected, it scans the drives that have not been scanned yet. Once every drive has been scanned, it reads **Rescan All**.
- A drive you just added arrives selected, so one click scans exactly what you added.

While a scan runs, the status line shows how many folders have been checked and how many photo folders have been found, and results fill in below as they are found. **Cancel Scan** stops it and keeps everything found so far. Closing the window also stops a running scan.

The scan reads folder listings only. It never opens a photo, so it does not download online-only cloud files, and a whole startup drive typically takes seconds. A network drive is slower, because every folder is a trip across the network.

What counts as a photo folder. Any folder that directly holds at least one file PhotoTaken can show: every supported RAW format, JPEG, HEIC, TIFF, PNG and the other bitmap formats, PSD, video, and PDF. A folder that only holds other folders is not listed, but its name is still searchable, as described below.

What the scan skips. Hidden folders, operating system folders (such as `Windows` and `Program Files` , or `/System` and `/Library`), application bundles, the inside of a Photos library, Lightroom preview caches, and a network storage box's own `#recycle` and `#snapshot` folders. On a Mac, iCloud Drive and the connected cloud folders are scanned even though macOS keeps them inside the hidden Library folder.

Searching. Type any part of a folder's name, its path, or its drive's name. Every word you type has to appear somewhere in the path, in any order, and capitalization does not matter. Because the whole path is searched, typing a parent folder's name finds the photo folders inside it: `henderson` finds `2024/Henderson Wedding/RAW` . Results appear as you type. The list shows up to 300 folders at a time, with a note to type more when there are more.

Camera photos only. On by default. It hides folders that hold no RAW, JPEG, HEIC, or TIFF, which keeps out the many folders on a typical drive that hold only icons, screenshots, or documents. The **Files** column then counts just the camera photos. Turn it off to see every folder with a supported file. Nothing needs rescanning when you switch it.

Adding to Favorites. Each result has an **Add to Favorites** button. Click it and the folder becomes a favorite; the button changes to **In Favorites**.

Tidying the list. Select one or more results (Shift-click, Ctrl/Cmd-click, or Ctrl/Cmd+A) and click **Remove Selected from List**, or press Delete. Those folders leave the list and stay out on later scans. Nothing on disk is touched. **Clear List...** asks first, then empties the whole list, including the record of what you removed, so the next scan rebuilds it from scratch. Your chosen drives and your favorites are kept.

Staying current. While PhotoTaken is running, it watches the drives you have scanned and updates the list when photos or folders are added, renamed, moved, or deleted, a couple of seconds after the change. Two cases need **Rescan** instead: network drives, which PhotoTaken does not watch because change notices across a network are unreliable, and anything that changed while PhotoTaken was closed.

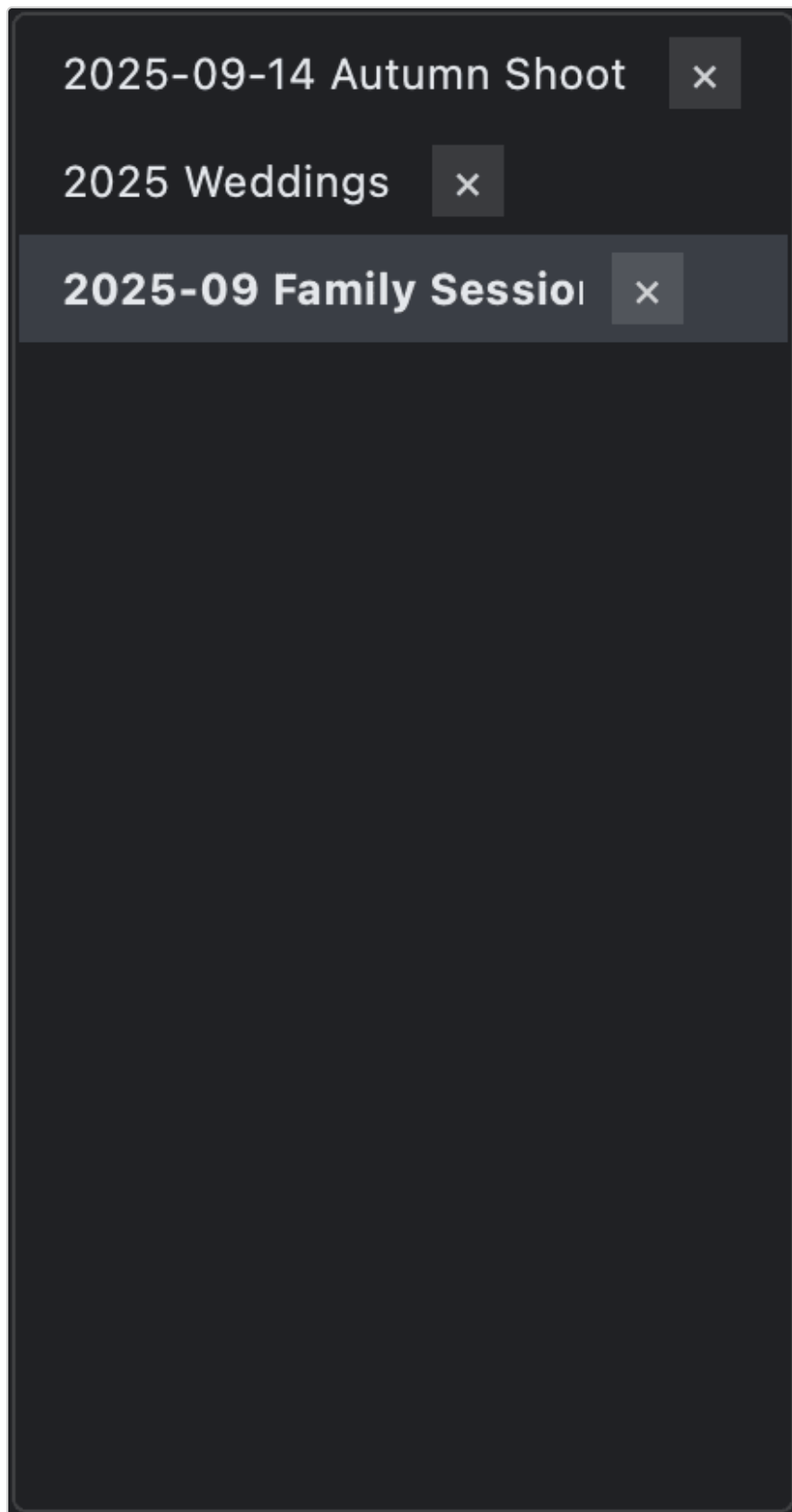
Unplugged drives. PhotoTaken knows each drive by an ID that belongs to the drive itself, not by where it is plugged in. Folders on a drive that is not connected stay in the list, grayed out, and the Location column leads with the drive's name, such as `Archive SSD (not connected)` : `2019/Wedding` , so you know which drive to fetch. While the window is open it checks every few seconds; plug the drive in and its folders become available again, even if Windows gives it a different drive letter. **Add to Favorites** is unavailable on a grayed row until the drive is back. Unplugging a drive never removes its folders from the list.

When macOS refuses access. macOS asks permission the first time an app reads an external or network drive. If the answer was **Don't Allow**, PhotoTaken cannot list that drive, and the scan says so in plain words instead of reporting an empty drive. Click **Open Privacy Settings** to go to **Privacy & Security** in System Settings, allow PhotoTaken there, and scan again. If macOS blocks only some folders inside a drive, the scan finishes and tells you how many it was kept out of.

Early results (optional). **Preferences > Performance** has a checkbox, off by default, that lets a scan also list folders the system's own file index already knows about: Spotlight on a Mac, or the Everything search program on Windows if it is installed and running. See Chapter 26.

8. The Tab strip

The **Tabs** panel is a list of folders you currently have open in the app. Click one to make it the active folder; the contact sheet switches to its contents. Think of it as browser tabs for folders, with the key difference that it's laid out **vertically**, stacked against the side of the window rather than running across the top.



The vertical open-folders tab strip, with several folders open.

Why vertical

Photography folder names are long. `2026-04-14 Sanders Wedding Day 2 Reception` doesn't fit in a 100-pixel horizontal tab without ugly truncation. Stacked vertically, each tab gets a full line to show its name at a readable size, and scrolling the strip is just a vertical scroll like everything else in the app. A horizontal tab bar across the top would force truncation on everything past the fourth or fifth open folder, which is exactly where large-shoot workflows start to matter.

Opening a tab

Clicking a folder in the **Favorite Folders** panel opens a tab for it. The folder is loaded into the contact sheet and appended to the Tabs strip. If a tab for the same folder already exists, the existing tab is reactivated, no duplicates.

Other ways a folder can open as a tab:

- **Ingest** (see Chapter 11) automatically opens the destination folder as a tab when a copy finishes.
- **Reopen Closed Tab** (Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+T) reopens the most recently closed tab.

Switching tabs

Click any tab to make it the active folder. The contact sheet switches instantly for folders that are already warm in the folder snapshot cache (see Appendix C) and starts a quick revalidate scan in the background. For a cold folder, thumbnails stream in as they decode, same as the first-time open in Chapter 3.

The active tab is visually highlighted **and** drawn in bold so you can always tell which folder is loaded at a glance, even if the row highlight is subtle in your current theme. When you click a different tab the bold moves over immediately, the contact sheet's header label flips to the new folder name with a brief "Loading..." suffix, and the grid then repopulates. On big folders (a few thousand thumbnails) you'll see thumbnail placeholders fill in over a moment as the cache warms up; the inline progress bar between the filter row and the grid tracks progress across the whole folder. A folder you've already viewed in full (its thumbnails still on disk) repopulates from the cache without the bar appearing, even though the tiles still fill in one by one; and if you return to a folder that was only partway decoded, the bar continues from where it left off rather than restarting. None of these states leave the click ambiguous, so you always know PhotoTaken registered the switch.

Your selection and scroll position in the previously-active tab are remembered and restore when you come back.

Closing a tab

Three equivalent ways to close the active tab:

- Click the **x** button on the right side of the tab.
- Press **Ctrl/Cmd+W**.
- Click **Close Tab** on the toolbar.

Closing a tab doesn't delete the folder on disk, it just removes the tab from the strip. Any unsaved tag mutations in flight (the background XMP writer) are allowed to drain normally; closing a tab doesn't cancel in-flight writes. Closing also discards that tab's remembered selection and scroll position, so reopening the same folder later loads it from the top.

Reopen Closed Tab

Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+T reopens the most recently closed tab. You can chain it, pressing Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+T ten times reopens the last ten closed tabs in reverse close order. After ten, older history falls off the stack.

You can also reopen via:

- The **Reopen Closed Tab** toolbar button (disabled when nothing has been closed).
- The **Reopen Closed Tab** entry in the Tabs panel's right-click context menu.

The closed-tab history is session-only, it doesn't persist across app restarts. Open tabs do persist, but that's a separate mechanism (see below).

Back and Forward (tab history)

When you bounce around between several tabs, it's easy to lose track of which one you came from. PhotoTaken records the order you've visited tabs this session and gives you Back and Forward controls that work the same way they do in a web browser.

Three ways to trigger Back and Forward:

1. The **Back** and **Forward** buttons on the toolbar.
2. **Alt/Option+Left** / **Alt/Option+Right** on Windows and Linux. On Mac the same shortcut is **Option+Left** / **Option+Right**.

3. The two side buttons under the thumb on a five-button mouse. PhotoTaken treats them exactly the way a browser does, back and forward through the tab history. (Apple's Magic Mouse and most trackpads don't have these buttons; if yours doesn't, just use the toolbar or shortcut.)

What gets recorded. Every time you switch tabs (by clicking the strip, by hitting Ctrl/Cmd+W and watching another tab become active, or by opening a new folder from the Favorites tree) PhotoTaken pushes the tab you were just on onto a Back stack and clears the Forward stack. Hitting Back pops one off and replays it; the tab you came from goes onto the Forward stack so you can return. Branching off, making a normal tab switch after going Back, wipes the Forward stack, the same way every browser does. The Back and Forward toolbar buttons disable themselves automatically when there's nowhere to go.

Closed tabs come back. If you close a folder tab and then hit Back, that folder reopens at the top of the Tabs strip and becomes the active tab. This means you don't have to remember whether you closed a tab or just switched away from it, Back does the right thing either way. (Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+T's "Reopen Closed Tab" still works on its own and is the fastest way to bring back the last close, regardless of where you've navigated since.)

Search Results tabs. Search Results tabs are part of the history while they're open. Closing a Search Results tab also evicts it from the history, because its result rows are session-only and would no longer be reconstructable, Back and Forward should never land on a tab whose contents are gone.

Folders deleted out from under you. If a folder you visited gets deleted on disk before you hit Back, PhotoTaken skips past that history entry and lands on the next live one, so you never end up staring at a broken tab.

Reordering tabs

Drag any tab up or down within the Tabs strip to rearrange the order. A thin insertion line shows where the tab will land; release to drop it there. The reorder is immediate and the dragged tab stays selected.

Refreshing a folder's thumbnails

Right-click a folder tab and choose **Refresh Thumbnails** to rebuild that folder's thumbnails from scratch. PhotoTaken first asks you to confirm ("Rebuild all thumbnails for '?'"); click **Yes** to proceed or **No** to cancel with nothing changed. On Yes it throws away the saved thumbnails for

that folder, both the in-memory copies and the ones cached on disk, drops its cached folder listing, and reloads the folder cold. The **Generating thumbnails** progress bar reappears and counts every photo in the folder again as the tiles decode fresh.

Two times this is useful:

- **A thumbnail looks wrong or out of date.** If you edited a photo in another app and its tile still shows the old version, or a thumbnail came out garbled, refreshing forces a clean rebuild from the current file on disk.
- **Re-testing load speed.** To see how quickly a folder builds its thumbnails from cold (rather than instantly from cache), refresh it and watch the progress bar.

Only the folder whose tab you right-clicked is affected; every other folder keeps its cached thumbnails. You can refresh the active tab or a background tab, refreshing a background tab switches to it so you can watch the rebuild. The action isn't offered on Search Results tabs, which hold search matches rather than a folder of files. (This clears PhotoTaken's own thumbnail caches only; it has no effect on whatever caching your operating system or antivirus keeps for the underlying files.)

Refreshing a folder's search index

Right-click a folder tab and choose **Refresh Search Index** to bring cross-folder search up to date for that one folder. Where **Refresh Thumbnails** rebuilds pictures, this rebuilds the folder's *search* data: it re-reads every file in the folder from disk, picking up ratings, color labels, and keywords, then rewrites that folder's rows in the search index and drops rows for any files that are no longer there.

Use it whenever the folder changed outside PhotoTaken and you want search to catch up without reopening the folder:

- **You re-tagged, rated, or keyworded photos in another app** (Lightroom, Bridge, Photo Mechanic). Those tools write an XMP sidecar without changing the photo's own modification time, so PhotoTaken's normal "did this file change?" check can miss them. Refresh Search Index re-reads every file unconditionally, so the new keywords and ratings show up in search.
- **Files were added or removed in Finder or Explorer.** New files get indexed; deleted ones are dropped from search results.

Unlike Refresh Thumbnails, this does not confirm first, does not rebuild thumbnails, and does not change your current view or which tab is selected: the work runs entirely in the background. The status bar shows a brief **"Reindexing "...** while it reads, then **"Search index updated for ""** for a few seconds. Any open Search Results tab re-runs its query automatically when the refresh lands, so new matches appear (and gone files disappear) on their own.

Two details worth knowing. Online-only cloud files (OneDrive Files On-Demand, iCloud "optimized" copies) are deliberately **not** read during the refresh, so it never triggers a download; those tiles keep whatever tags the index already holds and are not dropped. And if the folder can't be read at the moment (a drive that's asleep or disconnected), the refresh leaves the existing index untouched rather than wrongly clearing it. The action isn't offered on Search Results tabs.

Drag and drop onto a tab

You can drop files onto a tab from Windows Explorer. PhotoTaken treats it as a copy into that tab's folder, same as dropping onto the folder's tree entry in the Favorite Favorite Folders panel. The target folder doesn't have to be the active tab, dropping onto a non-active tab copies into that folder without changing which tab is active.

Files dragged from the contact sheet itself can also be dropped onto a different tab, this moves or copies (prompts on drop) the files between two open folders.

Persistence

Open tabs persist across sessions. PhotoTaken remembers every open tab and which one was active, and it saves that list in the background a moment after it changes, not only when you quit. That means your tabs come back even if the app is force-quit or crashes (for instance after a freeze) rather than closed cleanly, so a folder you had just opened, such as the destination an import just finished into, is never lost on the next launch. On relaunch, every tab reopens, the active tab becomes active again, and your selection in it restores.

If an open tab points at a folder that has since been moved, renamed, or deleted outside PhotoTaken, the tab opens empty and the folder-tree side gives an error on refresh. Close the tab with Ctrl/Cmd+W if you no longer want it.

When an open tab becomes unavailable

If the folder a tab points at becomes unreachable while PhotoTaken is running (you unplug the drive, the NAS goes offline, or the folder is deleted), the tab greys out in the strip and a tooltip indicates it is currently unavailable. The same background availability check that handles

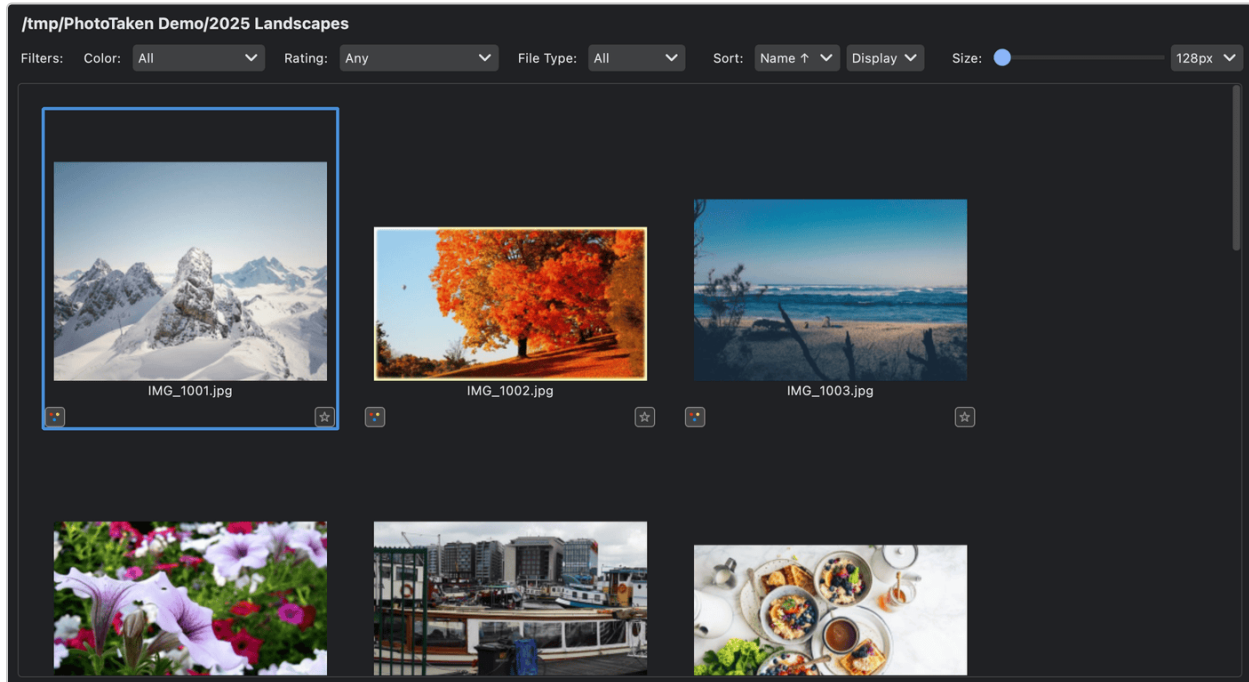
favorites (about once per minute, plus on each window-focus event) covers every open folder tab in the same pass. Because the check runs entirely off the UI thread, a dead network share never freezes the app while the OS tries to reach it. Reconnect the drive or bring the share back online and the tab clears on the next check cycle.

Search Results tabs are never greyed: they hold a result set from a previous query rather than a live folder path, so there is nothing to check.

Removing an unavailable tab. Close it with the tab's **x** button, **Ctrl/Cmd+W**, or the **Close Tab** toolbar button, exactly the same as closing any other tab. PhotoTaken does not auto-remove tabs on your behalf.

9. The contact sheet

The contact sheet is the grid of thumbnails in the middle of the window. It's where you spend most of your time in PhotoTaken, so understanding its knobs and how it responds to keyboard and mouse pays off fast.



A folder open in the contact sheet.

Anatomy

From top to bottom inside the contact sheet region:

- **Folder header.** A single line of large bold text showing the active folder's full path. If the path is longer than the window, it elides from the left so the folder name at the end stays readable.
- **Filter row.** Color filter dropdown, Rating filter dropdown, Sort dropdown, Display dropdown, size slider, size dropdown. See below.
- **Thumbnail grid.** The main area. Fills the rest of the vertical space. Scrolls vertically when the grid has more images than fit.

Thumbnail size

The **Size slider** in the filter row controls how large each thumbnail renders. It snaps to one of nine preset sizes:

128, 160, 192, 224, 256, 320, 384, 448, 512 px

The snap is a deliberate choice, arbitrary pixel sizes would force a re-decode on every tiny drag and thrash the thumbnail cache. Presets align with the cache so changing size is near-instant once the folder has been visited before.

The **size dropdown** to the right of the slider shows the current size (e.g. 256px) and lets you jump directly to any preset without dragging. Moving the slider updates the dropdown selection; picking from the dropdown moves the slider. The current size saves across sessions. The default is 256 px.

How thumbnails are cached. PhotoTaken always writes a single 512 px JPEG to disk for each image, regardless of the display size you've chosen. When you pick a smaller size, that cached 512 px copy is downscaled in memory at load time. This means every display size is served from the same file on disk, no redundant copies, no cache rebuild when you change sizes. The first load at any size after a cache miss decodes the original image at 512 px and stores it; every subsequent size change for that image is a fast in-memory scale. Because a size change is a rescale of the cached copy rather than a fresh decode, the **Generating thumbnails** progress bar stays hidden when you drag the size slider on a folder whose thumbnails are already cached; it appears only for any photos whose 512 px thumbnail hasn't been built yet.

Every tile is square at its chosen size, with a small caption area underneath it (see **Captions** below).

Sort

The **Sort** dropdown offers every sort order in both ascending and descending form:

- **Name** ↑ / **Name** ↓, alphabetical by filename.
- **Date** ↑ / **Date** ↓, by capture date (EXIF `DateTimeOriginal`), falling back to file mtime when EXIF is missing.
- **Rating** ↑ / **Rating** ↓, by star rating; untagged images sort as zero.
- **Size** ↑ / **Size** ↓, by file size in bytes.
- **Type** ↑ / **Type** ↓, alphabetical by extension (groups JPEGs together, RAWs together, etc.).

Your sort choice is per-session global, switching folders keeps the same sort order. It saves on quit and restores on launch.

Display fields

The **Display** dropdown in the filter row lists three checkable options: **Date**, **File size**, **Star rating**. Each toggle adds or removes a line of caption text under every thumbnail:

- **Date** shows the photo's *capture* date and time, e.g. `2026-04-14 15:22`, read from the photo's EXIF `DateTimeOriginal` (when the shutter fired) rather than the file's modified date, so copying, tagging, or syncing a file never changes it. Files with no capture date (the occasional scan or screenshot) fall back to the file's modified date. The capture date is read in the background just after a folder opens, so on the very first open of a folder the date can take a moment to appear; once read it's remembered, so reopening the folder shows it immediately.
- **File size** shows the file size in human units, e.g. `18.4 MB`.
- **Star rating** shows the rating as star characters, e.g. `★★★★☆`.

The filename is always shown and can't be hidden. Lines stay reserved when a field is enabled, a tile with no date still gets a blank line in the Date row, so all cells keep a uniform height. This keeps the grid from jumping when a folder mixes tagged and untagged images.

Display choices save across sessions.

Filtering

Three dropdowns in the filter row narrow which thumbnails are visible:

- **Color.** Options are **All** (no filter), **Untagged** (only images with no color tag), **Tagged** (only images that carry any color tag), and each of the 17 named colors from the PhotoTaken palette with a swatch icon. Picking a color filters the grid to images tagged with exactly that color.
- **Rating.** Two kinds of entry in one dropdown. The **exact** entries, **Unrated (no stars)** and **exactly 1** through **exactly 5**, show only images carrying precisely that star count (Unrated is exactly zero stars). The **threshold** entries, **≥1** through **≥5**, show images at that rating or higher. **Any** clears the filter. Exact-zero and exact-one are the headline cases: they isolate the shots you haven't culled yet, or the ones you flagged as rejects, which a minimum-only filter could never separate out.

- **File Type.** Lists only the formats present in the current folder. Each specific type filter shows tiles that contain the selected format, including paired tiles when the pair carries that format. Dragging a paired tile while a specific type filter is active moves only the matching component (e.g. NEF filter moves only the NEF, leaving the JPEG in place). Under **All**, pairs always move together. See Chapter 16 for the full description.

Filters combine. Selecting **Color: Red**, **Rating: ≥ 4** , and **File Type: RAW (any)** shows only 4- or 5-star red-tagged images that have at least one RAW file.

Filtering is non-destructive, hidden images stay in the folder, stay in the snapshot cache, and reappear the moment you clear the filter. The status bar shows **• N visible** when a filter is active.

Clearing a filter is just picking the top entry (**All**, **Any**, or **All** for File Type) again. There's no "clear all filters" button because there are only three filters and all are one click to reset.

Selection model

Selection works like Windows Explorer:

- **Click** selects one tile, replacing any existing selection.
- **Ctrl/Cmd+click** toggles the clicked tile in or out of the selection without disturbing other selected tiles.
- **Shift+click** selects a range from the previous click to the clicked tile.
- **Arrow keys** move the selection to the neighbor tile in that direction. Shift+arrow extends, same as click+shift.
- **Esc** clears the selection entirely.
- **Enter** opens the viewer on the currently-selected tile (see Chapter 13).

The selection count appears in the status bar. The Apply Stationery Pad, Edit IPTC Info, Compare, and Slideshow actions enable and disable based on how many tiles are selected (1, 1-or-more, exactly 2, or 2-or-more, respectively).

Press **?** to pop up a translucent card listing the shortcuts that apply to the contact sheet; press **?** again, **Esc**, or click anywhere to dismiss it. This is separate from **F1**, which opens the full guide instead of the quick cheat sheet.

Captions

Every tile caption is built from up to four lines, in this order:

1. The filename, always shown. For tiles that carry more than just a primary file (e.g. a JPG paired with a RAW, or a multi-RAW tile after a NEF → DNG conversion with keep-originals), the format extensions are joined with slashes: `IMG_0001.JPG/NEF/DNG`. This tells you at a glance exactly which siblings ride on the tile. See Chapter 10 for how tiles are composed.
2. The date, if the Display > Date toggle is on.
3. The file size, if the Display > File size toggle is on.
4. The rating, if the Display > Star rating toggle is on.

Each optional line takes a fixed vertical slot whether or not it has a value, so captions of different images always align cleanly.

Overlays on hover

When you hover a thumbnail, two overlay icons appear in the bottom-right corner:

- **Color swatch**, click to open a color-tag popup menu applied to the current selection (or just this tile if it's not in the selection).
- **Star badge**, click to open a star-rating popup menu, same targeting rule.

Keyboard shortcuts for color and rating are still the fastest way to tag (see Chapter 12 and Chapter 27), but the overlay buttons are there for mouse-only operation.

Below the hover overlays, any existing color tag and rating on the tile are rendered as small badges that stay visible regardless of hover state.

Performance notes

The contact sheet is designed to stay responsive on very large folders (tens of thousands of images). A few behaviors worth knowing:

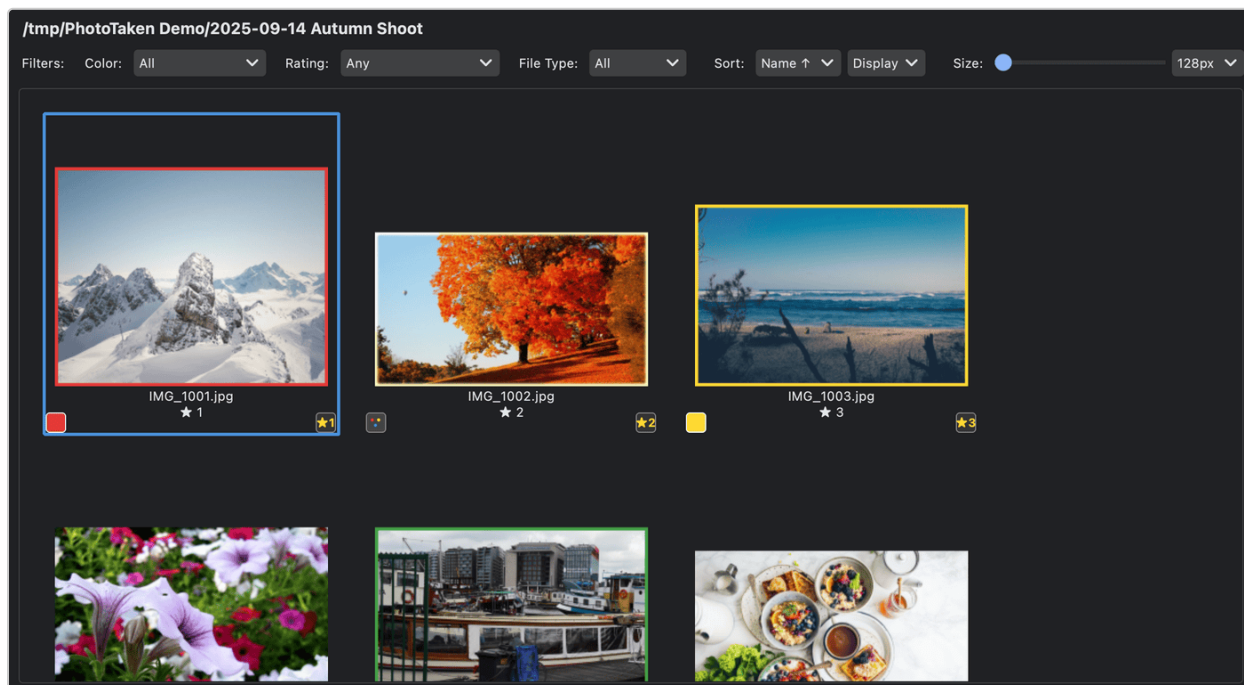
- **Thumbnails stream in.** On a cold folder, the grid is filled with placeholder tiles immediately and decoded thumbnails replace the placeholders as the worker pool finishes each one. You can scroll and select during decode; the grid does not block.
- **Revisits are fast.** The second time you open a folder (either in the same session or after a restart), PhotoTaken rehydrates the grid from a folder snapshot cache before the disk scan finishes. The full-fidelity scan runs in the background and reconciles differences (new files added outside the app, renamed files, etc.) without emptying the grid in between.

- **Auto-refresh.** PhotoTaken watches the active folder for filesystem changes. A new file dropped by Photoshop, an external rename, a delete outside the app, all of these land in the grid within about a second of the change (see Chapter 22, Rotating for a related behavior note). Rapid bursts of changes are debounced so the grid doesn't thrash. **Auto-refresh is intentionally disabled for network folders** (UNC paths, mapped network drives on Windows, mounted shares on Mac). Windows' `ReadDirectoryChangesW` and macOS FSEvents do not deliver reliable change notifications across SMB, and the act of registering the watch can itself stall the app for tens of seconds on a slow share. To pick up an external change in a network folder, switch tabs and back, or click the folder in the Favorite Folders tree to reload it. Local folders behave as before.
- **A new file from another app gets the spotlight.** When auto-refresh sees a single new file appear in the active folder (a Photoshop export saved into the folder you are viewing, for example), PhotoTaken selects that file and scrolls it into view, so the image you just produced is right there to tag without scrolling to find it. This is on by default; the **Scroll to a new file added outside PhotoTaken** checkbox in **Preferences > Files** turns it off. It is deliberately limited to a single new file: a card ingest, or any other batch of files arriving together, refreshes the grid without moving the viewport.
- **Viewport is pinned through deletes.** When you delete a tile, the grid's scroll position is held steady and the follower tile gets the new selection. You never lose your place in a long cull just because you removed a reject from the middle of the grid.

Caching behavior is tunable in **Preferences > Performance** (see Chapter 26). The defaults are chosen for a typical mid-range laptop on mid-sized shoots; bumping them up helps on slow disks and enormous libraries.

10. How photos are paired and grouped

PhotoTaken shows **one tile per shot**, not one tile per file. When a single shot produces multiple files on disk, a JPG next to a RAW, or a JPG next to both a NEF and a DNG after a convert-with-keep-originals, they collapse onto a single tile that owns every sibling. This chapter explains how that collapse is decided, what the tile knows about its siblings, and when the rule intentionally does NOT apply.



A RAW+JPEG pair shows as a single tile.

The core rule: group by stem

Two files are siblings if they share a **stem** (the filename without extension) in the same folder. `IMG_0001.JPG` and `IMG_0001.CR2` are siblings. `IMG_0001.JPG` and `IMG_0002.CR2` are not. `IMG_0001.JPG` in one folder and `IMG_0001.CR2` in a different folder are not siblings either, pairing only happens within a folder.

Comparison is case-insensitive. `img_0001.cr2` and `IMG_0001.JPG` are siblings; `DSC_0001.NEF` and `dsc_0001.nef` are the same file from PhotoTaken's point of view (and from Windows', NTFS is case-preserving but case-insensitive).

The standard JPG + RAW pair

When a folder contains a JPEG and a RAW with the same stem, the pair collapses onto a single tile. The JPEG is the **display** file (it's what the thumbnail decodes and what shows in the Viewer). The RAW rides along invisibly on the tile's data, it's not on screen, but the tile knows about it.

Operations that act on a paired tile:

- **Rename** renames both files in lockstep to match the new stem.
- **Delete** moves both files together to the Recycle Bin and restores both on Ctrl/Cmd+Z.
- **Tag** (rating, color, caption, copyright, etc.) writes to the JPEG's internal XMP and to an adjacent `.xmp` sidecar for the RAW.
- **Drag** to an external app sends the JPEG by default, the RAW with Ctrl/Cmd held (see Chapter 25).

The result is that a shot you captured in JPG+RAW behaves like one atomic object throughout the app, you never have to manage the RAW separately.

Multi-RAW tiles

Some workflows produce more than one RAW file per shot. The most common case is the **Convert to DNG** action (see Chapter 24) with the Delete-originals checkbox off: you end up with `IMG_0001.JPG`, `IMG_0001.NEF`, and `IMG_0001.DNG` all sharing a stem.

In this case the tile still collapses to one entry, the grid shouldn't explode into a separate tile for every derivative format. The JPEG remains the display file. Both RAWs ride on the tile. The tile's caption tells you at a glance what's there:

IMG_0001.JPG/NEF/DNG

The slash-joined extension list is the tile's way of saying "this one shot owns three files." Hover the tile for a tooltip that lists the full paths of every sibling.

Operations on a multi-RAW tile:

- **Rename** renames all three files (JPEG + NEF + DNG) to the new stem with their original extensions preserved. If any rename fails mid-batch, PhotoTaken rolls all the already-completed renames back so the tile stays internally consistent.
- **Delete** stages all three for the Recycle Bin together. Ctrl/Cmd+Z restores all three.

- **Tag** writes to the JPEG's embedded XMP, the NEF's `.xmp` sidecar, and the DNG's embedded XMP, every sibling gets the same rating and color.
- **Drag** default is still the JPEG. **Ctrl/Cmd+drag** sends a RAW, and when more than one RAW format exists the tile's context-menu **Ctrl/Cmd+drag RAW as** submenu decides which one. See Chapter 25.

Camera-native preference order

When a tile has multiple RAW siblings, PhotoTaken picks a **primary** RAW for backwards-compatibility purposes (the "Ctrl/Cmd+drag" default when no format preference is set, for example). The primary is chosen by walking this ordered list and picking the first extension the tile actually has:

```
.cr2, .cr3, .nef, .arw, .orf, .rw2, .3fr, .dng
```

The order puts camera-native formats first and DNG last. A JPEG + NEF + DNG trio has NEF as the primary because the NEF is what the camera wrote; the DNG is an ex-post-facto derivative. If a shot were somehow JPEG + CR2 + NEF (two camera-natives), CR2 would win, the order is stable and deterministic, though that case effectively never happens in practice.

The preference order is also what the tile's caption uses to decide the order of the slash-joined extension list.

TIFF and PNG are not pair members

The pairing rule above only groups JPEG with RAW. TIFFs and PNGs get their own tiles every time, even when they share a stem with a JPG or a RAW. That's deliberate:

- A TIFF is typically a Photoshop export or a retouched master. It's a primary deliverable, not a derivative of the JPG that lives next to it.
- A PNG is usually a graphic, a logo composite, or something else that's important on its own.

A folder with `IMG_0001.JPG` and `IMG_0001.TIF` shows **two** tiles, not one, the JPG and the TIFF are equal citizens. Same for `IMG_0001.JPG` + `IMG_0001.PNG`, and for `IMG_0001.CR2` + `IMG_0001.TIF`.

Conversely, `IMG_0001.TIF` + `IMG_0001.TIFF` in the same folder show as two separate tiles because `.tif` and `.tiff` are distinct extensions from a filesystem point of view, PhotoTaken doesn't normalize them into one. This is a corner case most folders never hit, but it's good to know.

Supported RAW extensions

PhotoTaken recognizes 26 RAW formats, covering Canon, Nikon, Sony, Fujifilm, Panasonic, Olympus / OM System, Pentax, Leica, Sigma, Samsung, Minolta, Epson, Kodak, Hasselblad, Phase One, Leaf, Mamiya, and Adobe DNG. The full table, with the extensions and the bodies that write them, is in Appendix A, RAW formats. It lives in one place on purpose so it can't go stale in two.

Any extension not in that table is not recognized as a RAW and therefore won't pair with a same-stem JPEG: PhotoTaken skips it entirely, it won't appear as a tile, won't pair with anything, and won't count against the folder's image total. See Formats not supported yet for the short list of formats that fall in that gap and why.

Supported bitmap extensions

For the primary-display side (the file whose thumbnail is shown and whose image opens in the Viewer):

- `.jpg` , `.jpeg` , JPEG, any variant.
- `.tif` , `.tiff` , TIFF, single-page baseline.
- `.png` , PNG, any variant.
- `.webp` , WebP, still or animated (the first frame is shown).
- `.avif` , AVIF.
- `.gif` , GIF, still or animated (the first frame is shown).
- `.bmp` , Windows bitmap.
- `.heic` , `.heif` , HEIC / HEIF, the format iPhones and many recent cameras shoot (read-only).
- `.psd` , Adobe Photoshop, read-only (see below).
- `.pdf` , PDF documents, first page shown (see below).

Every one of these gets its own tile and never hides behind a same-name JPEG, the same rule TIFF and PNG follow.

If a format you work with isn't here yet, write to support@lormarsoft.com. Formats get added because photographers ask for them.

Contact Us

About > Contact Us opens a window for bug reports, general feedback, and feature requests. Choose the kind, write your message, and optionally leave an email address so a reply is possible.

Include my log file attaches PhotoTaken's log for the current session, from the moment you started the application. That log records what the application did, which includes the names of folders and files you opened, and it is usually the difference between a bug being fixed and a bug being guessed at. The box is off by default, and **See exactly what the log contains** shows you the text before you decide. Your photographs are never sent, only names.

Two details are filled in for you, so you never have to look them up: the PhotoTaken version you are running, and your operating system (for example `macOS 26.5.2 (arm64)` or `Windows 11 (10.0.26100)`). Nothing else about your computer is collected.

Messages go to a form we own and arrive in our support inbox. If it cannot be reached, PhotoTaken opens your email program with the message already filled in, so what you wrote is never simply lost. Nothing is sent unless you press Send. See the privacy policy for exactly what is received and how long it is kept.

PDF files

A PDF gets its own tile showing **page 1**, with a page count badge in the top right. It never pairs with anything, so `scan.pdf` and `scan.jpg` in the same folder are two tiles.

Double-click hands the file to your default PDF viewer. PhotoTaken has no internal PDF reader and is not going to grow one, exactly as it hands a video clip to your usual player. For the same reason a PDF never appears in the full-screen Viewer, in compare mode, or in a slideshow, and the image-only actions (Edit IPTC Info, Edit EXIF Info, rotate, Convert to DNG, Export) skip or disable themselves for it.

What does work on a PDF: star ratings, color tags, keywords, rename, move, delete, the File Type filter, and search. Its date comes from the document's own creation date rather than a file timestamp. Tags go to an adjacent `.xmp` sidecar, so the document on disk is never modified.

Only the first page is rendered. A password-protected PDF cannot be rendered at all and shows an empty tile, the same as any file PhotoTaken cannot decode.

PSD (Adobe Photoshop) files

A PSD gets its own tile, just like TIFF and PNG, even when a JPEG or RAW of the same name sits next to it. Opening a PSD in the Viewer shows Pillow's flattened composite of the file, the same merged-down image you'd get flattening all layers in Photoshop. Some PSDs carry no usable composite, most often because they were saved without Photoshop's **Maximize Compatibility** option, in which case PhotoTaken falls back to the file's embedded preview when one exists (used for CMYK, 16-bit, and other cases Pillow can't decode directly); if neither is available, the tile is simply left empty rather than the app erroring out. The Metadata Panel reads a PSD's EXIF/IPTC the same as any other format. Star and color tags are written to an adjacent `.xmp` sidecar, exactly like a RAW or a video, so the PSD file on disk is never rewritten. Rename moves the PSD and its sidecar together. PhotoTaken does not edit, flatten, or export PSD content, and does not support `.psb` (Photoshop's large-document format) or per-layer rendering.

Video files

Video clips are first-class tiles in the contact sheet. Each clip gets its own tile (it is never paired with a same-stem photo) showing:

- a **poster frame**, a still grabbed from about one second into the clip (or earlier, for very short clips) with the bundled FFmpeg.
- a **play icon** in the center, so a video reads as a video at a glance, and
- a **duration badge** in the top-right corner showing the clip length as `M:SS` (or `H:MM:SS` past an hour). The length is read from the file's metadata with ExifTool, so it appears even before the poster frame finishes decoding.

Playing a clip. Double-click a video tile (or select it and press Enter) and PhotoTaken opens it in your operating system's default player for that file type, VLC, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, whatever you've set. There is no playback inside PhotoTaken by design: your own player is better at scrubbing, audio, and codecs than anything embedded would be. Because clips aren't images, they're skipped in the full-screen Viewer, in Compare, and in slideshows.

Tagging clips. Color labels and star ratings work on video exactly as on photos. Because rewriting a multi-gigabyte video file every time you change a rating would be brutal on USB and network drives (the same reason DNGs use sidecars), a clip's tags are written to an adjacent `<clip>.xmp` sidecar. Bridge, Lightroom, and Photo Mechanic all read and write video sidecars the same way, so your tags travel with the clip between apps.

What works and what doesn't. Renaming (single and batch), Ingest, drag-and-drop from Explorer/Finder, delete, **Rotate Left/Right**, and the Metadata Panel all handle video without any special steps (rotation for clips is covered in Chapter 22). The photo-only actions, **Edit IPTC Info**, **Edit EXIF Info**, and **Convert to DNG**, are greyed out whenever a video is part of the selection, since they don't apply to a clip.

Supported video extensions:

Group	Extensions
MPEG-4	.mp4 , .m4v
QuickTime	.mov , .qt
AVCHD / transport stream	.mts , .m2ts , .ts
Matroska / WebM	.mkv , .webm
Windows Media	.wmv
MPEG-1 / MPEG-2	.mpg , .mpeg , .m2v
Mobile	.3gp , .3g2
Professional / DVD / legacy	.mxf , .vob , .avi , .flv

HDR-aware poster frames and reading more video-specific metadata are planned follow-ups.

Part IV, The ingest → cull → deliver workflow

11. Ingesting from a card

"Ingest" is the copy step between card and library: getting the shoot off the memory card (or a staging folder) and onto your working drive, optionally with a second copy to a backup drive, and optionally with your standard metadata stamped onto every file as it lands. PhotoTaken's **Ingest** dialog walks this end-to-end.

Source — folder or memory card to ingest from:

/tmp/PhotoTaken Demo/2025-09-14 Autumn Shoot [Browse...](#)

Destination — where to copy the files:

/tmp/PhotoTaken Demo/2025-09-14 Autumn Shoot Imported [Browse...](#)

Backup destination — optional second copy (e.g. another drive) for safety. Leave blank to ingest to o

[Browse...](#)

Optional subfolder: e.g. 2026-04-14 Wedding — or {date:yyyy-mm-dd} for auto

Apply Stationery Pad: (none) ▼

☐ Filter by capture time (only import files in this range):

From 2026-07-12 12:00 AM to 2026-07-12 11:59 PM

Pick a source and destination, then click Start.

0%

[Start](#) [Cancel](#)

The Ingest dialog, with source and destination filled in.

Opening the dialog

Click **Ingest** on the toolbar. The dialog opens over the main window. It has six inputs (Source, Destination, Backup destination, Subfolder, Stationery Pad, and an optional capture-time filter), a status line, a progress bar, and Start / Cancel buttons along the bottom.

Source

The folder or drive you're copying from. Paste a drive letter (`E:\`), browse to a folder with the **Browse...** button, or type a UNC path to a remote share. PhotoTaken scans the source recursively for any supported image file, JPEG, TIFF, PNG, WebP, AVIF, GIF, BMP, and every supported RAW (see Chapter 10 for the full list).

The Browse button opens PhotoTaken's own folder picker, not the system's native one. There are two reasons for the swap. The first is that the native macOS picker hides `/Volumes` (the same way Finder does), which is where external drives, SD cards, and network mounts live. Without showing `/Volumes`, the picker is unusable for the common photographer workflow of "import from the card I just plugged in", the card simply isn't reachable. PhotoTaken's picker reveals `/Volumes` by default and even starts there on Mac, so every mounted volume is one click away. The second reason is the path bar at the top of the picker: type or paste any absolute path and press Enter to jump straight to it, instead of clicking down a tree. Same picker on Windows, where it shows the drive list at root.

Non-image files on the card are ignored. No subfolder structure of the source is copied; PhotoTaken flattens everything into the single destination folder you pick. This matches how photographers actually organize shoots, the card's internal `DCIM/100E0S5D/` or similar is not meaningful structure to carry forward.

Importing from an iPhone or Android phone

A **Phone...** button sits next to the Source field's **Browse...** button. Instead of picking a card, plug the phone in, unlock it, and click Phone...; PhotoTaken finds it on its own. If nothing turns up, the status line says "No phone found. Plug in an iPhone or Android and unlock it. On Android, pick Photo & Video transfer in the USB notification." If the phone is found but reports a problem, the status line says "The phone reported an error. If it's asking to trust this computer, tap Trust; otherwise unplug it and plug it back in." The first time an iPhone is plugged into a Mac it asks whether to trust the computer; tap **Trust** and the dialog carries on by itself. While PhotoTaken is still looking, the **x** beside the button stops the search and puts the dialog back the way it was for a card. The phone needs to be unlocked when you plug it in, or you can unlock it when PhotoTaken asks: if it's locked, the status line asks you to unlock it (for example "Unlock your iPhone to continue.", using the phone's own name), and the dialog picks up by itself as soon as you unlock it, no need to click Phone... again. Once the phone has been unlocked on that connection, locking its screen again doesn't stop an import already underway.

On a Mac, a **Phone...** button sits next to the Source field's **Browse...** button. Instead of picking a card, plug the phone in, unlock it, and click Phone...; PhotoTaken finds it on its own. If nothing turns up, the status line says "No phone found. Plug in an iPhone or Android and unlock it. On Android, pick Photo & Video transfer in the USB notification." If the phone is found but reports a problem, the status line says "The phone reported an error. If it's asking to trust this computer, tap Trust; otherwise unplug it and plug it back in." The first time an iPhone is plugged into a Mac it asks whether to trust the computer; tap **Trust** and the dialog carries on by itself. While PhotoTaken is still looking, the **x** beside the button stops the search and puts the dialog back the way it was for a card. The phone needs to be unlocked when you plug it in, or you can unlock it when PhotoTaken asks: if it's locked, the status line asks you to unlock it (for example "Unlock your iPhone to continue.", using the phone's own name), and the dialog picks up by itself as soon as you unlock it, no need to click Phone... again. Once the phone has been unlocked on that connection, locking its screen again doesn't stop an import already underway.

On a Mac, an Android phone works the same way, with one extra step on the phone. When it's plugged in, Android quietly posts a "Charging this device via USB" notification and doesn't ask anything. Tap it, and under "Use USB for" choose **Photo & Video transfer** (Android's camera mode, also called PTP). Then click **Phone....** **File transfer** is the mode macOS can't read, so PhotoTaken won't find the phone while it's in that mode. A cable that only charges, with no data wires, shows nothing at all, so if the Mac doesn't see the phone in either mode, try another cable. Photos come in under the names Android gave them, for example `IMG_20260930_133936476_HDR.jpg`, with the camera details and capture times intact, and **Since last import** works exactly as it does for an iPhone.

Once the phone is found, the Source field shows its name and becomes read-only, and a summary line reports how many photos are on it and the date span they cover, for example "1,164 photos, Jul 2018 to Sep 2026." Photos come in by default. Two boxes, both unticked to start, bring in more: **Include videos** and **Include screenshots and other images**, each labeled with a count. Screenshots and other images covers PNG, GIF, WebP, TIFF and the other non-photo formats PhotoTaken can open (AVIF, BMP, PSD, PDF), the phone's own screenshots and anything saved from Messages, Mail, or the web rather than shot with the camera. A Live Photo is a photo plus a short clip with the same name; the clip is a separate file on the phone and only comes in when Include videos is ticked. If you import the photos first and tick Include videos on a later run, the clip lands next to its photo under the same name, and the photo isn't copied again.

The first time you import from a given phone there is no default date range. The capture time filter must be ticked with a start date chosen before Start will run; without one, Start refuses with "First import from this phone: tick the capture time filter and pick a start date." Every import after the first opens with **Since last import** already applied: the From date is set one

second after the newest file that actually landed last time, so reopening the dialog and clicking Start brings in only what's new. The dates move there again after a run that brings something in, so clicking Start again without closing does the same; a run that lands nothing newer leaves the dates you picked alone (see **Importing again without closing** below). Pick your own dates instead to import a different range. The marker only ever moves forward; importing an older range leaves it where it was.

The marker is kept per phone and covers photos, videos, and other images together, there is no separate marker per kind. If a run is canceled, the phone is unplugged, or an error stops it partway through, the marker still advances to the last file that actually landed, so the next Since last import run picks up exactly where it left off. The marker and the date filter use the photo's capture date, because the phone doesn't report when a photo was added; a photo saved to the phone later (from Messages, say) keeps its original date, so it won't count as new and needs a date range to pick up.

If the phone disconnects mid-run, the status line reports it, for example "iPhone was disconnected. 212 of 340 imported." (the phone's own name comes first), and once the run stops the dialog goes back to the card setup; plug the phone back in and click **Phone...** to carry on. Everything else in the dialog works the same as it does for a card: destination, backup, rename template, Convert HEIC to JPG, quality, keeping the HEIC alongside the JPEG, a Stationery Pad, and the live thumbnail strip. Nothing is ever deleted from the phone; there is no delete option.

When two photos on the phone share a name (iPhones start numbering over after IMG_9999, so an old IMG_0064 and a new one can both exist), the second lands with `_2` added, for example `IMG_0064_2.HEIC`, and later imports still recognize it there and skip it rather than copying it again.

On Windows the same **Phone...** button works, with the same rules: the summary line, **Include videos, Include screenshots and other images**, the first-import date range, **Since last import**, and everything in the paragraphs above. Plug the phone in, unlock it, and click Phone.... Windows shows a phone as a device under This PC, and a few things differ from the Mac:

- **The first read is slow.** Windows has to list every folder on the phone, and on a big iPhone (about 9,200 photos and videos) that took several minutes the first time, between 2.5 and 5.5 minutes, and 10 to 12 seconds once Windows had cached it. While it reads, the status and summary lines count the folders done and the files found so far, for example "Reading your phone... 34 of 118 folders, 3,582 files". The file count moves every 200 files even inside one big month folder, which on a big iPhone can take Windows a couple of minutes

on its own. The progress bar keeps moving, and Start is off. When it finishes, the ready line adds "Windows reads a phone slowly the first time; later reads are much faster." once for that phone.

- **A locked phone looks empty.** Until an iPhone is unlocked and has allowed this PC (tap **Allow** or **Trust** on the phone), Windows lists it with nothing on it. PhotoTaken treats that as locked: the status line says "Unlock your phone to continue." and the dialog picks up by itself as soon as the phone is unlocked. Once the iPhone has been unlocked, locking it again doesn't stop a run already underway.
- **An Android that stops sending photos.** Sometimes an Android phone still lists everything to Windows, so the summary looks normal, but Windows copies nothing from it. That happens when the phone has been sitting idle or locked for a long time; unlocking it, or unplugging it and plugging it back in, brings it back. When a copy doesn't start, the status line asks you to unlock the phone by name (for example "Unlock your moto g play - 2023 to continue."). Unlock it within about five seconds of that line appearing and the run carries on by itself. Otherwise the run stops, and the status line says so, for example "moto g play - 2023 isn't sending photos. 0 of 40 imported. Unlock it, or unplug it and plug it back in, then click Start." The phone stays chosen: do either and click **Start** again, and **Since last import** picks up where the run stopped.
- **An iPhone sends JPG or HEIC.** Whether Windows gets a JPG or a HEIC depends on the phone's Settings > Photos > Transfer to Mac or PC setting and on the photo itself, so one import can bring both. **Convert HEIC to JPG** handles any HEICs that arrive, as it does on the Mac.
- **Either USB mode works on Android.** When you plug an Android phone in, the USB notification offers Photo & Video transfer and File transfer, and PhotoTaken finds the phone in either. Photo & Video transfer shows only the camera's photos and videos. File transfer shows the phone's whole storage, so photos in Download, Pictures, and similar folders come in too; apps' private data folders are skipped. Hidden folders on the phone, such as the `.thumbnails` cache, are skipped in both modes.
- **Cancel stops the run right away.** Windows copies a phone file in one piece, so a file it's still copying when you cancel, a long video say, finishes in the background and is then removed. Nothing from it is left in the destination. Click **Start** again right away and the new run waits for that copy to finish before it begins, since the phone copies one file at a time.

Nothing is ever deleted from the phone on Windows either.

Importing from the Photos library (Mac)

On a Mac, a **Photos...** button sits next to the Source field's **Browse...** and **Phone...** buttons. Click it and macOS asks, once, whether PhotoTaken may read your Photos library; choose **Allow** and the dialog carries on by itself. If you choose Deny, or Photos access is off for some

other reason, the status line reads "PhotoTaken isn't allowed to read your Photos library. Turn it on in System Settings > Privacy & Security > Photos." Turn it on there and click Photos... again.

Once access is granted, the Source field shows "Photos library" and becomes read-only. If the library has albums of its own, an **Album** dropdown appears, starting on **All Photos**, with those albums listed below it by name and item count, videos included (only your own albums; shared albums and smart albums aren't included). A library with no albums of its own skips the dropdown entirely. Picking a different album, or ticking or unticking **Import the edited version when there is one**, re-reads the library and updates the counts. While it's reading, the status line says "Reading your Photos library..." and Start is off. On a large library the first read can take a little while, so the summary line says the same thing, the progress bar keeps moving, and the Album dropdown shows up grayed out until the albums are in. If the read fails for any reason, the status line reads "Couldn't read the Photos library: " followed by what went wrong; pick another album, tick or untick the edited box, or click **x** and click **Photos...** again to try once more.

As with a phone, photos come in by default. Two boxes bring in more, each labeled with a count and both unticked to start: **Include videos** and **Include screenshots**. Screenshots here means whatever Photos itself has flagged as a screenshot, not a guess PhotoTaken makes on its own, so something Photos doesn't tag that way, a photo saved from Messages, say, comes in as an ordinary photo instead. Hidden photos, the ones tucked into Photos' own Hidden album, never come in at all. A Live Photo's short clip counts as a video, and only comes in when Include videos is ticked.

Tick **Import the edited version when there is one** to bring in your Photos edits (crop, exposure, filters, and so on) instead of the untouched original. Leave it unticked, the default, and you get exactly what the camera captured. Either way the file keeps the camera's original name; only its contents, and for an edited image saved in a different format, its extension, change. Switching this box on for a later run won't bring the edited version into a folder that already holds that photo's original from an earlier import; use a new destination folder to get the edit.

The since-last marker works the same way it does for a phone. The first import from the Photos library has no default range: the capture time filter must be ticked with a start date chosen before Start will run. Every import after that opens on **Since last import**, with the From date set to one second after the newest file that landed last time, and the dates move there again after a run that brings something in; pick different dates instead to import a different range. The marker is kept per Mac rather than per Photos library, so importing on two Macs that share the same iCloud Photos library gives each one its own marker and its own idea of what's new.

With **Optimize Mac Storage** turned on for Photos, some originals may live only in iCloud rather than on this Mac. PhotoTaken downloads those as it goes: the status line reads "Downloading from iCloud... NN%" while one is coming down. When the run finishes, the summary line adds how many files came from iCloud and how many of those downloads failed, so it's clear at a glance whether anything needs a retry.

Photos... and Phone... cover two different things. Photos... is the whole Photos library: every album and, with iCloud Photos on, everything in the library, minus photos you've deleted or hidden, whether or not the phone is nearby. Phone... is only what's actually on the device plugged in right now. Photos... is the easier route when the phone isn't at hand, or when the shots wanted are older than what the phone is still holding; Phone... is the one to reach for when the phone is right there and only its own contents matter.

Everything else in the dialog works the same as it does for a card: destination, backup, rename template, Convert HEIC to JPG, a Stationery Pad. Nothing here is ever written back to Photos: PhotoTaken only reads from it. The star ratings and color labels applied in PhotoTaken go into the copied files and their XMP sidecars, never back into the Photos library.

Destination

Where the copies land. Pick an empty folder for a new shoot, or an existing folder if you're adding to a shoot already in progress. PhotoTaken doesn't care which, duplicate filenames are handled automatically (see **Filename collisions** below).

The destination defaults to **the folder you have open in PhotoTaken right now**. Most of the time you click Ingest from inside the working library folder you want the new shoot to land in, so this is one less Browse round trip. If no folder is open, the field falls back to whatever destination you used on the previous ingest. Either way you can type over it or Browse for a different one, the prefill is a starting point, not a constraint.

The source is also remembered between ingests. Photographers tend to re-import from the same card slot or the same staging drive shoot after shoot, so when you reopen Ingest the Source field is already pointing at last time's location. Type or Browse to override.

You can also type a folder that doesn't exist yet. When you click **Start**, if the folder it would go in exists, a **Create folder?** question names it: **Yes** creates it and the import carries on, and **No** creates nothing and leaves the status line reading "Destination folder is not valid." If the folder above it is missing too, there's no question, only that line, since a missing parent is more likely a typo than a new shoot folder.

The Destination and Backup destination pickers each include a **New Folder...** button alongside Cancel and OK. To use it, click the folder you want to create the new subfolder inside (or type a path in the box at the top), then click **New Folder...**, type a name, and confirm. PhotoTaken validates the name (rejecting characters that aren't legal on disk, such as `\\ / : * ? " < > | )`), creates the folder, and selects it in the tree so OK is one click away. This avoids the round trip of switching to Finder or File Explorer to make a shoot folder before ingest.

Backup destination (optional) ◆

If you want a mirror copy on a second drive, essential for shoots you can't re-shoot, fill in the **Backup destination** field. Every file in the ingest is copied to both destinations. The copy only counts as complete when both destinations have received the file and the size of each copy matches the source.

Dual-destination semantics:

- If the backup copy fails for any reason (drive full, permission denied, disconnected), the primary copy is **rolled back** too. PhotoTaken refuses to leave you with a file in primary and a hole in backup, that's worse than no copy at all because you'd think you had a backup.
- If the primary copy fails, the backup copy is never attempted for that file (there's nothing to mirror).
- The dialog's progress counts both copies as a single file, "copied 47 of 212" means 47 files have landed successfully on both drives.
- Stationery Pad stamps apply to both copies.

Leave the Backup destination field blank to do a single-drive ingest. This is fine for shoots you've already re-shot, family snapshots, casual portraits, but a bad idea for paid client work.

The Backup destination is remembered separately from the primary, and persists across sessions.

PhotoTaken won't let you set the Backup and primary Destination to the same folder, that would defeat the mirror guarantee.

Subfolder (optional)

A subfolder name that gets created under both Destination and Backup destination before the copy starts. Leave blank to copy directly into Destination.

The Subfolder field supports template tokens so the name can be computed from the shoot's capture date or camera:

- Literal: `2026-04-14 Wedding`, used verbatim.
- `{date}` or `{date:yyyy-mm-dd}`, capture date of the earliest file in the source (e.g. `2026-04-14`).
- `{date:yyyymmdd}`, compact form (`20260414`).
- `{yyyy}`, `{mm}`, `{dd}`, individual date parts.
- `{exif:camera}`, camera model of the earliest file (e.g. `Z 9` or `EOS R5`).
- Any combination: `{yyyy}-{mm}-{dd} {exif:camera}` → `2026-04-14 Z 9`.

The date resolution walks the source looking for the oldest capture date, falling back to file mtime if EXIF is missing. Illegal filename characters (`\ / : * ? " < > |`) are stripped from the rendered result automatically, so `{exif:camera}` is safe even if your camera model contains a colon.

Full token reference is in Chapter 21 Renaming.

Apply Stationery Pad (optional) ◆

A dropdown of your saved Stationery Pads, plus a **(none)** option at the top. Picking a pad stamps that pad's IPTC metadata onto every file as it's copied, the same write you'd get by selecting the files after ingest and running **Apply Stationery Pad**, just happening in-flight so there's no second step.

Each ingest starts with **(none)** selected: a pad is applied only when you pick one for that import, never carried over automatically, so files are never stamped without you choosing to. (For a video clip the pad is written to a `.xmp` sidecar rather than embedded.) Pads are created and managed from the toolbar's **Manage Stationery Pads** button (see Chapter 20).

Convert HEIC to JPG (optional) ◆

Phones shoot HEIC. It is a good format and a compact one, but plenty of programs, labs, and client workflows still cannot open it. Ticking **Convert HEIC to JPG** writes a JPEG copy of every HEIC and HEIF on the card as it is imported, so what lands in your folder is already usable everywhere.

Three controls sit on the row:

- **Convert HEIC to JPG** turns the whole thing on. Off by default.

- **Quality**, 50 to 100, default 92. Higher keeps more detail and makes a bigger file. Above roughly 92 the file grows noticeably faster than the picture improves, which is why 92 rather than 100 is the default.
- **Also copy the HEIC** decides whether the original lands beside the JPEG. Unticked, only the JPEG arrives.

Nothing is ever deleted from the card. "JPG only" means the HEIC was not copied into your folder, not that it was removed from the card. The originals stay where they are until you erase the card yourself.

What carries across. Capture date, camera, lens, exposure, and GPS are all copied onto the JPEG. This is deliberately more than **Export / Convert** copies: an export is making a delivery file for someone else, so it leaves GPS behind, while an ingest is making the working original you will keep, and stripping its location would quietly damage your archive.

Color. iPhones shoot in Display P3, a wider range of color than the older sRGB standard. The profile is carried onto the JPEG untouched rather than converted, so saturated reds and greens survive the trip. Converting at import would clip them permanently with no way back.

Rotation. Phone photos carry a note saying which way up they were taken. PhotoTaken's decoder applies that rotation itself and then writes the JPEG the right way up, resetting the note so nothing rotates it a second time. A portrait photo arrives as a portrait photo.

When a photo already has a JPG. Some phones can be set to save both a HEIC and a JPG of every shot. When both are on the card, the HEIC is copied as-is rather than converted: the converted file would want the same name as the JPEG already sitting there, and the two belong together under one name. Nothing is lost and nothing is renamed behind your back, and the status line during the import says how many photos this applied to.

Re-importing a card you already converted. Normally PhotoTaken recognizes an already-imported photo by name and file size (see Filename collisions below). That cannot work for a converted file, because converting is supposed to change the size. Instead the JPEG in your folder is matched to the HEIC on the card by capture time, so a second import of the same card skips them instead of converting everything again as `_2`. If a file carries no capture time at all, PhotoTaken imports it rather than skipping it: a duplicate you can delete is a much smaller problem than a photo that never arrived.

Editions. Pro only, greyed out in Light. The same conversion is what **Export / Convert** does for photos already on disk, and that is a Pro feature, so it stays Pro here too.

Filter by capture time (optional)

Below the Stationery Pad row is a **Filter by capture time** checkbox. Underneath it sit four pickers in one row: a **From** date and a From time, then a **To** date and a To time. Tick the checkbox to restrict the ingest to a specific window; leave it unchecked (the default) to import everything on the card.

Dates use ISO `yyyy-MM-dd` formatting with a calendar popup. Times use 12-hour clock with AM/PM. The default values cover the whole of today: From = today 12:00 AM, To = today 11:59 PM (stored as 11:59:59 internally so the last minute of the day is fully inside the window). Ticking the box without touching the pickers therefore ingests "everything from today", which is the most common slice.

When the filter is on, only files whose modification time (mtime) falls inside the inclusive From/To window are copied. Cameras stamp each photo's file mtime with the moment of capture, so in practice this acts as a capture-time filter without paying the cost of reading EXIF from every file before deciding what to copy (which would noticeably delay the start on large cards).

Typical uses:

- **Most recent shoot only.** A card holds last weekend's wedding plus a week of casual frames. Set From to the start of the wedding day and To to the end of it. Only that shoot is copied; the rest stays on the card for a separate import (or for deletion later).
- **Skip a botched start.** A shoot's first hour was test exposures you don't want in the library. Set From to the moment the real session began.
- **Catch only today's frames.** When grabbing the latest tethered drops from a working card every couple of hours, set From to your last grab time.

RAW+JPEG pairs are kept together: if either file in a pair is inside the window, the whole pair is included, so a pair whose timestamps drifted by a second or two between bodies isn't accidentally split across two import sessions.

If no files match the window, the dialog says `No image files match the capture time filter.` and nothing is copied. If From is after To, the dialog rejects Start with `Capture time filter: 'From' must be before 'To'.`

The filter is a one-shot setting (re-opening the dialog resets it to off, though it stays as you left it between runs in the same dialog), since the default for almost every ingest is still "everything".

Running the ingest

Click **Start**. The dialog's status line shows progress like (47/212) IMG_0047.JPG . The progress bar fills from 0 to N. The Start button is disabled during the run; Cancel becomes **Cancel** (from its idle Cancel-or-Close label).

Below the progress bar, a horizontal **thumbnail strip** fills in as the run goes: every successfully copied file lands as a tile (with the filename caption), and the strip auto-scrolls so the most recent tile is visible. RAW files use their embedded preview, so even big card dumps build the strip almost immediately. The strip stays responsive no matter how many photos the card holds: each finished preview is matched straight to its tile, so a several-thousand-file import never bogs the window down while building previews. This is the visual confirmation that the right card is being read and that files are actually landing, useful when copying from slow USB-C readers where the progress bar can sit on one big RAW for several seconds.

During the run:

- **Copies are verified by size.** Each file's copy is compared to the source by byte count. A truncated copy (drive filled up mid-write, etc.) counts as an error, not a success.
- **Stationery Pad applies per file as it lands**, to both destinations when a backup is set.
- **Photos already in the destination are skipped.** If a source file matches one already at the destination by name and byte size (the case when you re-insert a card you have already imported), it is logged as skipped rather than copied again, so re-running an import is a safe no-op instead of a source of duplicates. PhotoTaken never clobbers existing data. Skipped files don't appear in the thumbnail strip; only successful copies do.

When the run finishes, the status line shows a summary (Done. Copied 212, skipped 0, errors 0.) and Cancel becomes **Close**.

A message about the phone (on a Mac or Windows) or the Photos library (Mac only) that needs you to do something (no phone found, unlock the phone, the phone reported an error, the phone was disconnected, Photos access refused, a library that can't be read) also shows in a highlighted amber **banner** with a ⚠ just above the status line, because a status line alone is easy to miss. The banner goes away once that's sorted out, when the source is cleared, or when the next run starts. A card import never shows it: card problems, such as a source folder that isn't valid, stay in the status line.

Importing again without closing

When a run ends, whether it finished, was canceled, or failed, **Start** comes back on and every field can be changed again. Click **Start** for another import without closing the dialog. The summary, the thumbnail strip, and any banner from the last run stay up until you do; the new run then starts from a cleared strip and an empty progress bar.

- **From a card or dropped files**, the run simply goes again. Files already at the destination are skipped (see **Filename collisions** below), so running the same card twice copies nothing the second time.
- **From a phone or the Photos library**, the dates move to **Since last import** after a run that brings something in, the same default a fresh pick gets. A run that lands nothing newer (an older range that was all skipped, or a cancel or failure before the first file) leaves the dates you picked alone. Start reads the phone or the library again before it plans, so a photo taken since the last run is seen, and only what's new comes in. With nothing new, the status line says "No image files match the capture time filter."

The phone or the Photos library stays chosen between runs. A phone locked in between shows an unlock message such as "Unlock your iPhone to continue.", and unplugging it puts the dialog back to the card setup with Start on. **Close** closes the dialog and lets go of the phone or the library.

Filename collisions

A name clash is handled one of two ways, depending on whether the file is actually the same photo:

- **Same photo already there (same name, same byte size)**. This is the re-import case: you put back a card you already copied. PhotoTaken treats it as a duplicate and **skips** it, so you don't end up with `IMG_0001_2.JPG` sitting next to an identical `IMG_0001.JPG`. The end-of-run summary counts it under "skipped."
- **Different photo that happens to share a name (size differs)**. Here PhotoTaken keeps both by bumping the new file's stem with a numeric suffix, so nothing is clobbered:

```
IMG_0001.JPG → IMG_0001_2.JPG  
IMG_0001.CR2 → IMG_0001_2.CR2
```

The decision applies to the whole RAW+JPEG pair as a unit: the pair is skipped when every member that's already there is size-matched, and if it does bump, both files bump to the same `_2` stem so they stay matched. If only half of a RAW+JPEG pair landed earlier, a re-import

puts the missing half beside it under the same name rather than making a `_2` pair. When a Backup destination is active, both sides stay synchronized: a bumped stem has to be free on both drives before the copy can use it.

From the Photos library, there's no byte size to go on until a file has been copied out, so a same-named file already in the folder is matched by when it was shot instead: a photo's capture date, allowing for the time zone it was taken in, and a video's or Live Photo clip's recording date. A match is skipped without being copied out of Photos again. If the date can't settle it, the file is copied out and compared byte for byte with the same-named files already there (including `_2` style names), and skipped if one is identical, so importing the same range twice doesn't leave duplicates. The byte comparison is skipped when **Convert HEIC to JPG** applies, since a converted JPEG never has the HEIC's bytes; those rely on the date match alone.

Sidecar files (ratings, labels, keywords)

An XMP sidecar is a small `.xmp` file that sits next to a photo and stores its star rating, color label, and keywords. For RAW files this sidecar is the *only* place PhotoTaken records that information, since PhotoTaken (like most tools) won't rewrite a 30 to 50 MB RAW just to record a star. If you rate or label shots on the camera (some recent bodies write XMP), or tagged them earlier in another application, that work is in these sidecars.

Embedded copyright is seeded into a new sidecar. A RAW that came off the card often already carries a copyright, creator, or caption embedded inside the file itself, set in-camera or by an earlier tool. When PhotoTaken creates a sidecar for that RAW for the first time, it copies those embedded fields (copyright, creator, caption, and any keywords) into the new sidecar before adding your rating or label. This matters because a tool like Lightroom, once it sees a sidecar, treats the sidecar as the authoritative metadata for the RAW; a sidecar that held only a rating would leave Lightroom showing a blank copyright and drop it on the next save. Seeding makes the sidecar a superset of the RAW, so your rights information travels through instead of being shadowed. Sidecars created by an earlier version of PhotoTaken are left exactly as they are.

Ingest copies sidecars in alongside their photos, so your ratings and labels survive the import instead of being stranded on the card. Three details worth knowing:

- **They follow their photo.** A sidecar lands under the same stem the photo was given, so if `IMG_0001.NEF` had to become `IMG_0001_2.NEF` to avoid a clash, its sidecar becomes `IMG_0001_2.NEF.xmp` (or `IMG_0001_2.xmp`) and stays pointed at the right file.

- **Both naming styles are recognized.** Some tools name the sidecar `IMG_0001.xmp` (just the photo's stem) and others name it `IMG_0001.NEF.xmp` (the full filename). PhotoTaken handles either, and either letter case (`.xmp` or `.XMP`).
- **Orphans are kept.** A sidecar whose photo isn't on the card is copied anyway, under its original name, so stray metadata is never silently discarded.

Sidecars don't appear as their own tile in the live thumbnail strip (they aren't images), and a Stationery Pad is never written into a sidecar; the pad stamps the photo's own metadata.

Cancel

Click **Cancel** mid-run. The current file finishes (or rolls back if it was mid-mirror), and no further files are copied. The dialog shows `Canceled. Copied N, skipped M, errors E`. Click **Start** to run again, or close the dialog with Cancel-now-labeled **Close**.

Partial copies left on the destination from before the cancel stay where they are, they're valid copies of valid files. If you want to remove them, use the contact sheet's delete (Chapter 23) once the destination folder opens.

What happens after a successful ingest

PhotoTaken opens the destination folder as a new tab (see Chapter 8) so you can start working on the shoot immediately. The active tab becomes this new folder; thumbnails stream in as they decode.

If you also set a Subfolder, the destination folder that opens is `<Destination>/<resolved-subfolder>/`, not the bare Destination. That's almost always what you want, the new tab lands you straight inside the shoot you just ingested.

When to use Ingest vs. a plain file copy

Ingest is optimized for one-shot card-to-library moves with built-in backup verification and metadata stamping. It's the right tool when:

- You want a verified mirror copy.
- You want a Stationery Pad applied during the copy.
- You want the destination tab to auto-open on finish.

Plain Windows Explorer copy is fine when you're moving a handful of individual files or restructuring your library internally. There's no one-true way, use whichever matches the intent.

macOS AppleDouble sidecars are filtered automatically

If you've ever inserted a card into a Mac (even just to preview shots), macOS will have written a hidden companion file named `._FILENAME` next to every photo on the card. These are AppleDouble sidecars: SD cards are formatted FAT32 or exFAT, neither of which can store macOS extended attributes (Finder tags, quarantine flags, etc.), so macOS quietly stashes that metadata in a sidecar that begins with `._`. They're invisible in Finder by default because filenames starting with a dot are hidden, but their extensions match real photos (`._IMG_0001.CR2` looks like a `.CR2` file), so many third-party tools show them as broken duplicate thumbnails.

PhotoTaken filters them out at two places. The Import dialog skips them so they never reach your destination drive, and the contact sheet skips them when scanning any folder, so even if a few snuck in via a manual file copy you'll never see them in the grid. This is automatic on both Windows and Mac, there's nothing to configure.

Drag and drop from Finder or Explorer

You don't have to open the Ingest dialog by hand. Photographers who keep their working library on external drives (which is most of them, once total volume passes a few hundred gigabytes) often want to grab images from a card without ceremony. PhotoTaken supports that: drag from Finder (Mac) or Windows Explorer onto PhotoTaken and the Ingest dialog appears with both ends of the copy already chosen.

Three drop targets are accepted:

- **The thumbnail grid (contact sheet)**, destination is the folder currently displayed. If no folder is open, you'll see a "no folder open" notice; open a tab first.
- **A tab in the Tabs strip**, destination is that tab's folder. Useful when you have multiple working library folders open and want to drop images into a specific one without first switching to it.
- **A folder in the Favorites tree** (or any subfolder visible underneath a favorite), destination is the folder you dropped onto.

The Ingest dialog opens with Source and Destination filled in. From there it behaves like a manual ingest: progress bar, live thumbnail strip, Cancel button, optional Stationery Pad, optional Backup destination, optional Subfolder template. Nothing copies until you click **Start**.

Folder drops vs. file drops

PhotoTaken's behavior depends on what you actually dragged:

- **One folder dragged.** The importer treats that folder as the source, exactly as if you'd picked it via Browse. It walks the folder recursively and ingests every supported image (and pairs RAW+JPEG together as usual). Use this when you want the whole shoot.
- **One or more files dragged (any combination).** The importer ingests **only those specific files**, even if their parent folder contains many more. Use this when you want a hand-picked subset off a card. RAW+JPEG pairs only travel together if you included both halves in the drag selection.
- **Mixed drops (a folder plus some files at once).** Treated as a file-list drop; the loose files are taken, but folders inside the multi-item selection are ignored. If you want both, run two separate drags or use the Browse button.

Plus the macOS AppleDouble filter described above still applies, so a `._IMG_0001.CR2` accidentally selected in Finder is silently dropped from the plan.

Why drag and drop instead of clicking Ingest?

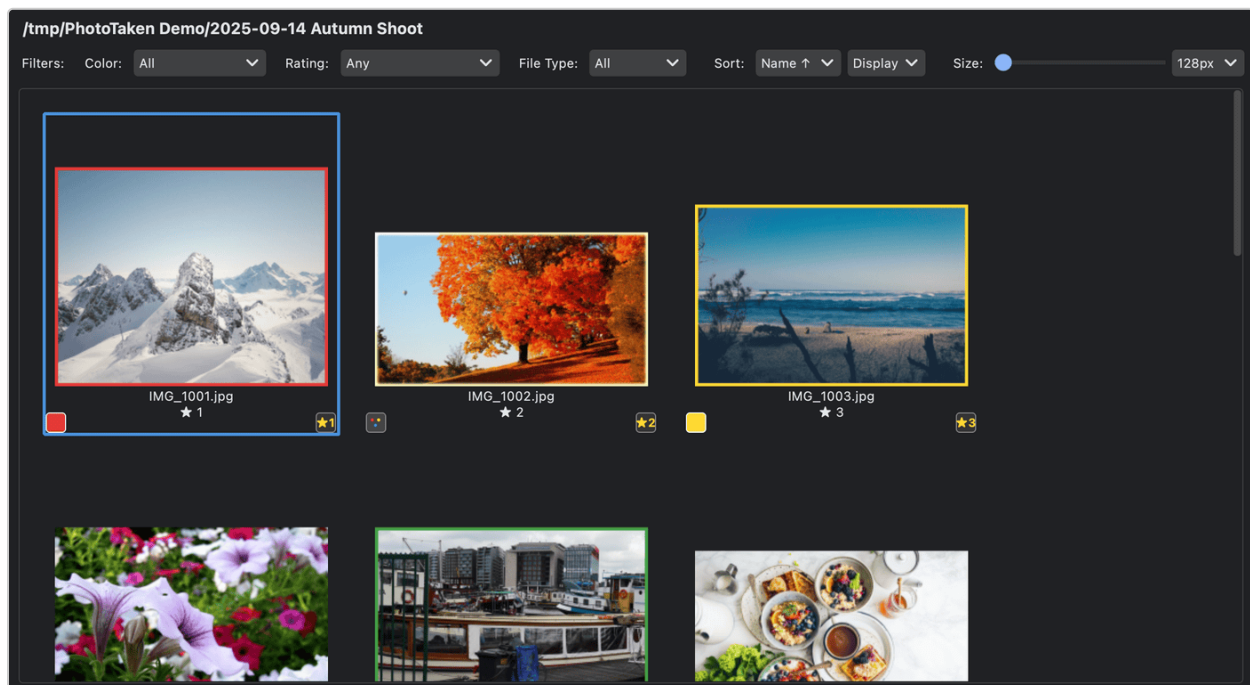
A few reasons:

- **Speed.** When the card is already open in a Finder/Explorer window, dragging into PhotoTaken is two clicks; opening Ingest, browsing to source, browsing to destination is six.
- **Subfolder selection.** If your card writes images into per-camera subfolders (`DCIM/100CANON` , `DCIM/101CANON`), dragging just the one subfolder you want is faster than typing or browsing to that path.
- **Hand-picked subsets.** If you only want to import twelve specific shots out of five hundred (a quick selection for a same-day delivery), drag and drop is the only way to do it without first creating a temporary folder.

The destination side is also smarter than a click-Ingest start: dropping onto a specific tab or favorite means the destination is set without you typing it, which avoids the typo class of "I just imported into the wrong folder" mistakes.

12. Rating and color tagging

Culling is the main job the app is built for, and tagging is how you communicate cull decisions, both to yourself (which shots to come back to) and to the next tool in your pipeline (Lightroom, Photo Mechanic, a JPG delivery folder). PhotoTaken offers two orthogonal tagging dimensions: **star ratings** and **color tags**, both stored in standard XMP so they travel with your files into every other XMP-aware tool.



The contact sheet, with color tags and star ratings visible on each tile.

Star ratings (0-5)

Every image can carry a rating from 0 (unrated) to 5. Typical uses:

- **1 star**, "worth a second look."
- **2 stars**, "solid shot."
- **3 stars**, "delivery candidate."
- **4 stars**, "standout of the set."
- **5 stars**, "portfolio piece."

None of those meanings are enforced by PhotoTaken; the rating is just an integer. Pick the scheme that fits your workflow. Whatever you pick is compatible with Lightroom and Photo Mechanic because all three tools write the same XMP tag.

Color tags

PhotoTaken ships with a **17-color palette**, extending the typical 4-to-8-color palette you'll see in Lightroom or Photo Mechanic to give you more room for semantic distinctions:

Red, Orange, Yellow, Lime, Green, Teal, Cyan, Sky Blue,
Blue, Indigo, Violet, Purple, Pink, Magenta, Brown,
White, Gray

Each color shows as a swatch next to its name in menus and next to the color filter dropdown. The color name is rendered with its keyboard shortcut letter in parentheses, e.g. **Red (R)**, **Cyan (X)**, **Sky Blue (S)**, so the menu doubles as a shortcut cheat sheet. On the tile itself, the color appears as a small corner badge.

Color tags are mutually exclusive, an image has either one color or none, not two at once.

Color assignment is your choice. A common pattern:

- **Red**, rejects (but not deleted yet, maybe client approval pending).
- **Green**, picked.
- **Blue**, delivered.
- **Yellow**, needs retouch.
- **Purple**, composites / stacks.

Keyboard shortcuts

Tagging is keyboard-first because during a long cull you should never have to touch the mouse. With the contact sheet focused (or inside the Viewer for a single-image tag):

Ratings:

- **1** through **5**, set that star rating.
- **0**, clear the rating.

Colors: each color has a single letter, chosen to be mnemonic:

Key	Color	Key	Color
R	Red	I	Indigo
O	Orange	V	Violet
Y	Yellow	P	Purple
L	Lime	K	Pink (has a <i>K</i> in it; <i>P</i> was taken)
G	Green	M	Magenta
T	Teal	N	browN (<i>B</i> was taken)
X	cyan (<i>X</i> from <i>XAN</i> ; <i>C</i> conflicts with Compare)	W	White
S	Sky Blue	A	grAy (<i>G</i> was taken)
B	Blue		

- \ (backslash), clear any current color.

All shortcuts apply to the **entire current selection**, not just one tile. Select 50 tiles, press **G**, and all 50 flip to Green.

These are the keys in the default **PhotoTaken** layout. You can switch layouts or set your own in **Preferences > Keyboard**; see Changing the keys.

A full keyboard reference lives in Chapter 27.

Tagging from the context menu and overlays

If the keyboard isn't convenient, you're primarily mouse-driving, or just checking one file, two visual paths work too:

- **Hover overlays.** Hover any thumbnail. A color swatch and a star badge appear in the bottom-right corner. Click either for a popup menu.
- **Right-click menu.** Right-click a thumbnail, pick **Color** or **Rating** from the submenus.
- **Inside the Viewer.** Right-click the full-size image for the same color / rating submenus. Changes sync back to the contact sheet thumbnail the moment you pick a value.

Undoing a tag change

Press **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** to undo the most recent color or star rating change. If the change was applied to a multi-select batch, the entire batch reverts together in a single press, you don't need to press undo once per photo. This is the same undo history that reverts a delete, so Ctrl/Cmd+Z always undoes whichever action, a tag change or a delete, happened most recently, in reverse chronological order across your last ~50 actions this session. It works identically in the contact sheet and in the Viewer. See Chapter 23 for the full undo model, including how tag undo and delete undo share one timeline.

Where tags live on disk

Tags are written to the industry-standard **XMP** metadata fields:

- `xmp:Rating` , integer 0 through 5.
- `xmp:Label` , the verbatim PhotoTaken color name (e.g. `Red` , `Sky Blue`).

Where the XMP ends up depends on the file type:

- **JPEG, TIFF, PNG, WebP, AVIF, GIF.** XMP is written *inside the file itself*. No extra file to manage.
- **BMP.** XMP is written to an adjacent `.xmp` sidecar. This is not a caution about rewriting the file, the way it is for RAW: BMP simply has no metadata container of its own, and ExifTool cannot write the format at all, so a sidecar is the only place the rating and color can live.
- **PDF.** Also a sidecar. A PDF *can* carry XMP, but writing it means an incremental update to a document you may be about to sign, send, or archive. A star rating is not worth changing a contract, so PhotoTaken leaves the file alone.
- **Every RAW format, DNG included.** XMP is written to an adjacent `.xmp` sidecar. PhotoTaken never writes into a proprietary RAW container (the format isn't safe to modify). DNG *could* carry XMP internally, but rewriting a 30-50 MB DNG every time you change a keyword is brutal on USB and external drives, so PhotoTaken uses a small sidecar for DNG too, the same way Photo Mechanic and Adobe Bridge do. A DNG tagged in an older PhotoTaken that only has embedded XMP is still read (and gets a sidecar the next time you tag it).

Sidecar naming: Standard vs Photo Mechanic style

There are two conventions for naming a RAW's sidecar, selectable under **Preferences > Files > RAW Sidecars**:

- **Standard** (`IMG_0001.xmp` , the default), where the extension is replaced with `.xmp` . This is the form **Lightroom**, **Bridge**, **Camera Raw**, and **Capture One** read, so RAW ratings, labels, and keywords appear when you import the file into those tools. If your workflow includes Lightroom, keep this.
- **Photo Mechanic style** (`IMG_0001.ARW.xmp`), where `.xmp` is appended to the full filename. This is the form **Photo Mechanic** and other ExifTool-based tools use. **Lightroom does not read it**, so pick it only if your workflow is centered on Photo Mechanic. (The `.ARW` in that example is just Sony's RAW extension; your camera's RAW files carry their own, such as `.CR3` , `.NEF` , or `.RAF` , and the sidecar name keeps whatever yours is.)

Reading is convention-agnostic: PhotoTaken finds a sidecar in *either* form regardless of the setting. When you change the option, PhotoTaken offers to convert the folder you have open right away; anything you skip is converted one file at a time, as you tag it. Move, copy, rename, and delete preserve whichever form a sidecar already has.

When a photo has one of each. PhotoTaken never creates a second sidecar for a file it already has one for, but another program can: if your other tool writes the form PhotoTaken is not currently using, that photo ends up with two companion files, each maintained by a different program and each holding its own answer. Whichever matches your current setting is the one PhotoTaken shows, so switching the setting swaps which set of tags you see.

PhotoTaken resolves this the moment it touches such a file, whether through the conversion offer or the next time you tag it: the two are combined into a single companion file under your chosen naming. The newer file's value wins for anything the two disagree on, and any field only one of them had is kept. That last part matters, because the newer file is often the *sparser* one; a program that wrote nothing but a color label should not erase the capture date and creator that the older file carried.

For a paired tile (JPG + RAW) or a multi-RAW tile (JPG + NEF + DNG), a tag write hits every sibling: the JPEG's internal XMP gets updated and each RAW/DNG sidecar gets updated, so your tags stay consistent no matter which file you open downstream. (In Standard naming, siblings **on the same tile**, like a NEF and a DNG kept side by side, share one `IMG_0001.xmp` ; the rating and label written to it are identical for both, which is the point. Files that are *separate tiles* never share one: a `DSC_0001.NEF` and a `DSC_0001.MOV` are two different photos as far as you are concerned, so the video keeps its tags in `DSC_0001.MOV.xmp` and the RAW keeps

DSC_0001.xmp , the name Lightroom looks for. If an older version of PhotoTaken left the two sharing a single file, opening the folder gives each its own copy, so neither loses the tags you can see today.)

Windows Explorer "Copy + Paste" sidecar handling

If you duplicate a RAW + sidecar pair via Windows Explorer (Ctrl+C / Ctrl+V or Ctrl+D), Windows produces a sidecar named like IMG_0001.NEF - Copy.xmp rather than the expected IMG_0001 - Copy.NEF.xmp . This happens because Windows treats .xmp as the only extension and inserts " - Copy" before it. The orphan name doesn't match what PhotoTaken expects, so without special handling the rating, color tag, and keywords would seem to disappear in the duplicated tile.

PhotoTaken automatically detects the Windows-style orphan at read time and pulls tags from it. The next time you change a tag on that file, PhotoTaken renames the orphan to the standard form, so you don't end up with two sidecars on disk for the same primary.

All writes go through ExifTool. They're queued onto a background thread so the UI doesn't block during rapid-fire tagging.

The _shootdesk_tags.json cache

Every folder PhotoTaken has browsed picks up a small file in the folder called _shootdesk_tags.json . It's a JSON dictionary mapping each filename in the folder to its current color and rating, mirroring what's in XMP.

The cache exists for **speed**. Reading XMP for every file in a folder of five thousand RAWs takes tens of seconds. Reading a JSON dictionary takes milliseconds. On folder open, PhotoTaken paints tag badges from the JSON instantly, then a background XMP reader confirms the values against the actual files and reconciles any drift (tags edited in another tool, for example) without blocking the UI.

The JSON cache is **not authoritative**. If you delete it, PhotoTaken rebuilds it from XMP on the next folder open. If the JSON says one thing and the XMP says another, the XMP wins.

You don't need to back up _shootdesk_tags.json . Back up your photos; the cache rebuilds itself.

Legacy label import

Some older photography tools ship with a canned set of label names (Winner, Superior, Extras, Trash, etc.) rather than colors. When PhotoTaken reads an image whose `xmp:Label` is one of those legacy names, it **maps** the name to the closest PhotoTaken color as a one-way import:

Legacy label	Imported as
Winner	Red
Winner Alt	Yellow
Superior	Green
Superior Alt	Blue
Typical	Magenta
Typical Alt	Cyan
Extras	Orange
Trash	Purple

The import is **one way only**, PhotoTaken never writes those legacy names back out. It always writes the verbatim PhotoTaken name. If you switch back to the old tool, it'll see PhotoTaken's names (Red , Yellow , etc.) in the Label field rather than its own defaults.

Auto-advance while culling

For a keyboard-only culling flow, turn on **Preferences > Thumbnails > Culling > Advance to the next photo after applying a color or rating**. With it on, every tag keypress (ratings 1-5, rating clear 0, any color letter, and the color-clear backslash) automatically moves the selection to the next photo. The effect: you press R, the photo gets a red label and the selection jumps to the next one, ready for your next keypress, with no need to touch the arrow keys between tags.

A few rules keep it predictable:

- **Single-select only.** Auto-advance fires only when exactly one photo is selected. If you have several selected and press a tag key, all of them are tagged as before, and nothing advances.
- **Grid.** The advance steps to the next visible tile in the current sort order, skipping tiles hidden by the active color or rating filter.

- **Fullscreen viewer.** The advance works in single-image mode. It does not fire in compare mode (two to four images) or in slideshow mode (the slideshow has its own auto-advance interval).
- **No wrap.** The advance stops on the last visible photo. It does not jump back to the first one, so you know when you have reached the end of a folder.
- **Quick toggle.** Press **U** in the grid or the viewer to turn auto-advance on or off without opening Preferences. A brief on-screen message confirms the new state, and because U flips the same underlying setting, the Preferences checkbox always agrees with it.

The setting is off by default so that a photographer who is deliberate about when they move on sees no change in behavior until they opt in.

Roundtripping with Lightroom and Photo Mechanic

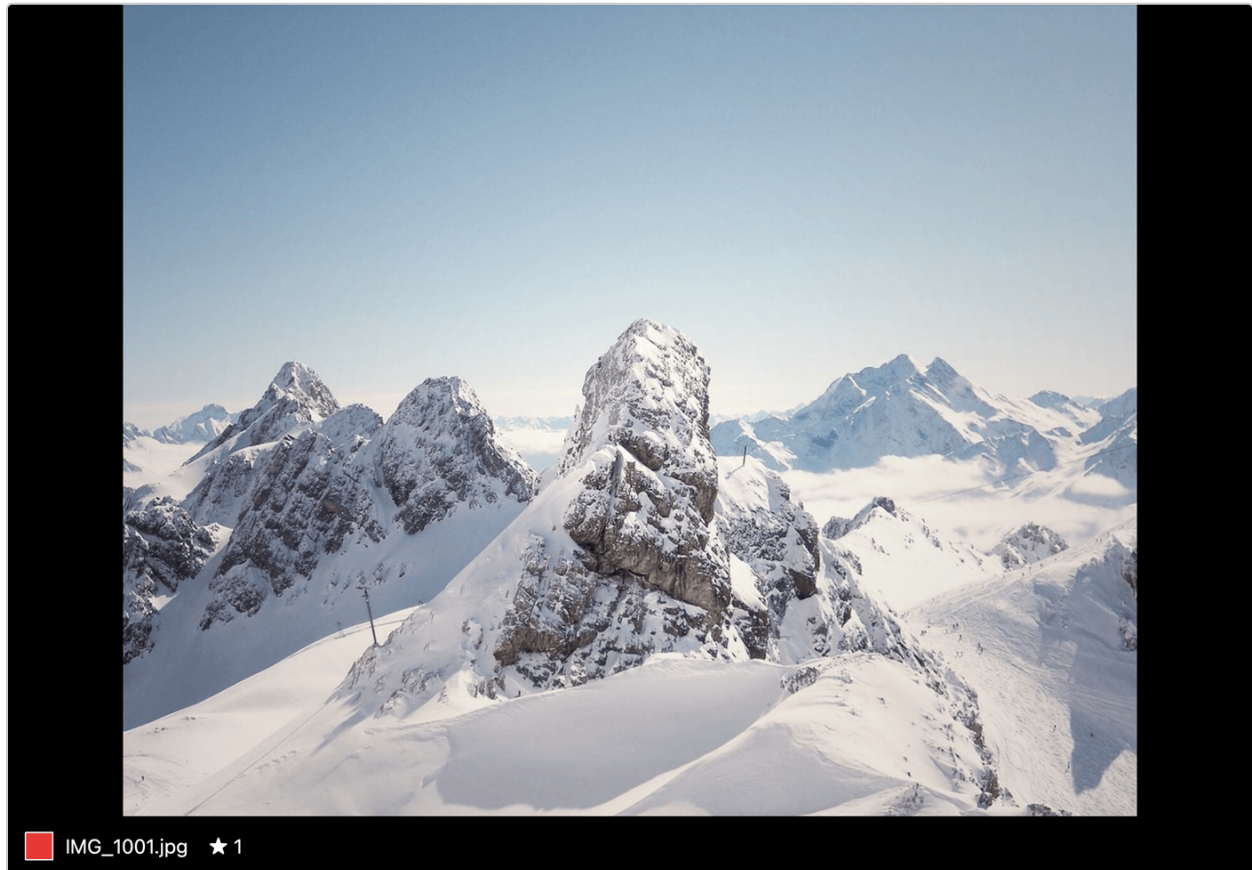
Because tags live in standard XMP, the round trip to Lightroom or Photo Mechanic is automatic:

- **Open a PhotoTaken-tagged folder in Lightroom.** Lightroom reads the XMP and shows the ratings and colors (Lightroom uses a smaller built-in palette, so custom colors like `Sky Blue` render as custom-label names rather than predefined colors; that's a Lightroom display quirk, not a data loss).
- **Tag in Lightroom and return to PhotoTaken.** PhotoTaken's background XMP reader notices the cache and XMP differ, updates the cache to match XMP, and repaints the badges.
- **Same thing for Photo Mechanic.** Photo Mechanic writes the same XMP tags and sidecar convention, so tags flow bidirectionally without any import/export step.

The only "gotcha" is that some tools are slow to flush XMP to disk. If you tag in a tool that caches writes, you may need to quit that tool before PhotoTaken sees the updates.

13. The viewer

The **Viewer** is the single-image full-size display. It's where you inspect focus, check expressions, read signage, spot blinks, and generally do any pixel-level judgement that the thumbnail grid is too small for. This chapter covers everything the viewer does.



The full-screen viewer.

Opening

Two ways to open the viewer on a thumbnail:

- **Double-click** the thumbnail.
- **Press Enter** with the thumbnail selected.

The viewer takes over the main window, the contact sheet is hidden behind it, and the side docks and toolbar are still visible around the image. The image renders centered on a neutral dark-gray background that fills the viewer area. A thin **info bar** runs across the bottom.

The info bar

The info bar shows:

- **Color tag swatch**, if the image has a color tag.
- **Filename**: for a standalone file, its name; for a RAW+JPEG pair, the combo the tile shows (for example `DSC_9288.JPG/NEF` , or `IMG_1.JPG/NEF/DNG` for a trio). When a File Type filter is active, the matching extension is accented in a soft amber, the same highlight the thumbnail uses, so under a RAW filter the `NEF` stands out.
- **Capture date** and **file size**, each shown only when you have that field turned on in the contact sheet's **Display** dropdown.
- **Star rating** as filled star characters, when the Rating field is on and the image has a rating.

The info bar mirrors the thumbnail caption: the same Date, Size, and Rating choices from the **Display** dropdown decide which fields appear here, so an opened image reads the same as its tile. (The zoom level shows at the right whenever you are not at Fit.)

The info bar stays visible at all times; the image is sized so it never hides behind the info bar. Two identical images at different orientations (portrait vs. landscape) fit differently but neither gets clipped, the full image is always visible above the info bar.

Navigating between images

You're viewing one image at a time, but the whole folder is still addressable:

- **Left / Right arrow**, previous / next image, walking the folder in the **current sort order** of the contact sheet (Name, Date, Rating, whatever you had set).
- **Mouse wheel** up / down: same previous / next semantics. Scrolling **down** moves to the next image and scrolling **up** goes back, and this is true on both Windows and Mac (PhotoTaken normalizes the wheel direction so the user-visible gesture is the same regardless of whether the OS has natural scrolling on). One tick per image; there's no inertia-scroll.
- **Esc** or the close button, exit the viewer and return to the contact sheet. If you browsed to a different image, the grid follows you and selects the one you ended on, so the next keyboard action (Delete, a tag key, Enter to re-open) applies to that image. If you closed on an image that was already selected, your selection is left alone, so opening one photo out of a selected set and pressing Esc gives you the whole set back rather than dropping photos from it.

Press **?** to pop up a translucent card listing the shortcuts that apply to the viewer; press **?** again, **Esc**, or click anywhere to dismiss it. This is separate from **F1**, which opens the full guide. While the card is open, **Esc** dismisses the card rather than closing the viewer.

Navigation respects any **filter** active on the contact sheet. If you have Rating ≥ 3 applied, Left/Right only steps between 3+ star images. This matches the typical second-pass-cull pattern, filter to the shots you'll use, then review them full-size.

Zooming the image

The viewer's **+** and **-** keys drive a continuous, animated zoom: every press multiplies the current scale by about 1.15 (a touch under 15%) and the image glides smoothly to the new size over a fraction of a second. The bottom info bar's right side reads out the current scale as a ratio (for example **2.1:1** above 1:1, or **1:3.5** below it). At Fit the indicator is hidden so the info bar stays uncluttered for the normal cull flow.

Three explicit anchor levels are still reachable for snap-to behavior:

Level	Meaning
Fit	Whole image visible inside the viewer (the default; what you see when you first open a photo). Zoom out always clamps here.
1:1	One source pixel per screen pixel. The focus-check view.
11:1	The upper bound on zoom in (one source pixel painted across 11 screen pixels). Useful for sensor-dust and micro-detail checks.

Keyboard:

- **Z** toggles between **Fit** and **1:1**. This is the cull-pace shortcut: arrow to a photo, **Z** to check the eyes, **Z** again to back out, arrow to the next photo. Same shape as Lightroom's Z key.
- **+** (or **=**, since Shift+= produces "+" on US layouts) zooms in by about 15% per press, animating to the new size. **-** zooms out by the same amount. Each press is monotonic: **+** always grows the image, **-** always shrinks it. **-** clamps at Fit (the image is always at least fully visible), and at the bottom of the range it snaps back to true Fit mode so a window resize re-fits cleanly. **+** clamps at 11:1.
- **Ctrl/Cmd+0** snaps directly to Fit. **Ctrl/Cmd+1** snaps directly to 1:1.

Mouse:

- **Ctrl/Cmd + mouse wheel** zooms in / out, the same way it works in Photoshop and Lightroom. The zoom is anchored to the cursor: the image point under the pointer when the wheel turns stays under the pointer as the image grows or shrinks, so you can drive into a face, an eye, or a sensor-dust suspect without panning afterward. As soon as you hold **Ctrl/Cmd** the cursor switches to a crosshair-in-a-circle so the zoom target is visible before you scroll. Release the modifier and the cursor returns to the standard arrow. This matches the behavior in Lightroom, Capture One, and Photoshop's hand-tool zoom.
- **Click and drag** anywhere on the image to pan, when you're zoomed in far enough that the image overflows the viewer. The cursor changes to a closed-hand while you're dragging. Dragging after a cursor-anchored zoom drops the pinned point: the next Ctrl/Cmd+wheel re-aims at the new cursor position rather than restoring the old one.

Arrow keys split by modifier. Plain Left / Right always step to the previous / next image, including when you're zoomed in. This is intentional and works with the carry-zoom behavior: a burst-focus-check session at 1:1 is "arrow, arrow, arrow" and each frame opens at 1:1. To pan the visible region around a zoomed image, hold **Ctrl/Cmd** and press an arrow key; Up / Down / Left / Right pan the viewport. At Fit (or any zoom where the image already fits in the viewer), Ctrl/Cmd+arrow is a no-op since there's nothing to pan. Click and drag works as an alternative for mouse-led panning.

Navigating to a new photo keeps the current zoom mode, zoom scale, and pan position. This is the Lightroom / Photo Mechanic cull convention: hold 1:1 (or any continuous zoom) across consecutive frames and the viewer holds the focus-check view as you arrow through the burst. The new image gets a fresh full-resolution decode in the background if you're above 1:1, so each frame sharpens up as it loads. Press **Ctrl/Cmd+0** to drop back to Fit when you're done pixel-peeping. Same-file refresh (rotation, external save) also keeps zoom and pan, so a tap of Rotate doesn't yank you out of a focus check either.

Sharpness above 1:1. When you cross 1:1, PhotoTaken reads the original file in the background and swaps in the full-resolution pixels so the view at 1:1 and above shows the real pixels instead of an upscale of the 2400-pixel-on-the-long-side preview. This is on by default. You'll see a brief soft-to-sharp transition per image as the decode lands; in exchange, a 4:1 view of a 60-megapixel RAW shows real pixels.

If you'd rather have an instant scale-up (no re-decode pause, slight softness past 1:1), turn off **Preferences > Viewer > Re-decode at full resolution when zooming past 1:1**.

The full-res copy is dropped when you navigate away, so a folder full of huge RAWs never sits in memory at once. The 2400-pixel preview cache (the back-scroll cache described below) is unaffected. The full-resolution decode is requested every time you land on a zoomed-in frame,

including when you scroll back to a photo you already viewed (whose preview is now in the back-scroll cache). Earlier builds took the cache shortcut on the return trip and left you on the soft preview upscale; now the back-and-forth A/B comparison that's central to picking the sharpest frame in a burst shows real pixels on every frame, in both directions.

The filmstrip

The viewer shows one photo at a time, which is the point of it, but it costs you your bearings: partway through a burst it's easy to lose track of where you are and what you've already looked at. The filmstrip gives that back without giving up the full-size view.

Move the pointer into the bottom of the window and a strip of thumbnails slides up over the image. It's centered on the photo you're looking at, with the shots before and after it either side. Click one to jump there. Move the pointer back up toward the picture and the strip slides away after a moment.

The delay before it hides is deliberate. Without it, the strip would flicker every time the pointer crossed the boundary while you were dragging a zoomed-in image around.

Marks on the tiles. Each thumbnail carries the same color bar and star count you see in the contact sheet, painted with a dark outline so they stay readable over a bright frame. The photo currently on screen has a white border. Tag a photo with a letter or number key and its tile updates as you press it, so you can watch your picks build up along the strip while you cull.

The key reminder. Nothing on screen would otherwise tell you the strip has a shortcut at all, so a small pill appears at its right-hand end each time it comes up, above the thumbnails. It reads **(backtick) pin** while the strip is auto-hiding and ** (backtick) unpin** once it's pinned, so it always says what the key will do next rather than what it just did. It fades after about three seconds and comes back the next time the strip appears, which keeps it useful while you're learning and out of the way once you aren't.

Pinning it open. Press ``` (the backtick key, immediately left of **1**, on the same key as `~`) to pin the strip open. It then stays up regardless of where the pointer is, which is what you want when you're working back and forth across a set rather than reading one frame at a time. Press it again to let it auto-hide. A brief **Filmstrip: On / Filmstrip: Off** message confirms the change, and PhotoTaken remembers the setting for next time. There's no Preferences checkbox for it: the key is the control.

Scrolling it. The mouse wheel over the strip scrolls it sideways through the folder. The wheel over the picture still moves to the previous or next photo, exactly as before.

Where it isn't. Compare mode doesn't get a filmstrip: two to four panes are already tight on space, and "the next photo" means something different in each pane. A slideshow doesn't get one either, because a slideshow is a presentation, and nothing should slide in over it.

Why it doesn't move the picture. The strip floats over the bottom of the image rather than pushing it up. If it took its own row, the photo would be resized and re-rendered every single time the strip appeared or vanished, which on a large RAW is exactly the kind of stutter this app exists to avoid. Floating it costs you a sliver of the frame while it's showing, and nothing at all when it isn't.

Where the thumbnails come from. They're the same thumbnails the contact sheet already built. PhotoTaken keeps those on disk keyed by file and modification time, so opening the filmstrip on a folder you've been browsing costs no new decoding. Only the tiles you can actually see are loaded, so opening the viewer on a folder of several thousand photos doesn't start several thousand decodes.

Overview navigator

Whenever you're zoomed in past Fit, the viewer paints a small thumbnail of the whole frame in its top-right corner, the **overview navigator**. A bright rectangle drawn on the thumbnail (with a dark halo so it reads over any image content) marks the portion of the frame currently filling the viewport. As you pan, the rectangle tracks the visible region in real time.

The point is to keep your bearings while pixel-peeping. At 4:1 on a long lens you can lose track of where you are in the frame; the navigator shows it at a glance. It's also how you catch what's happening *outside* the zoomed-in view: culling a burst of two birds, you might be focus-checking one bird while a second enters or leaves the frame, or you may have nailed focus on the other subject entirely. The navigator surfaces that without making you zoom out and back in for every frame.

It's interactive:

- **Click** anywhere in the navigator to recenter the main view on that point of the frame.
- **Click and drag** inside the navigator to scrub the visible region around, for example, to follow a subject from one side of the frame to the other while staying at 1:1.

Both gestures pan within the image's bounds: the view never scrolls past an edge, so a click in a corner snaps to that corner rather than overshooting. Dragging in the navigator is independent of the click-and-drag hand-pan on the main image; pressing inside the navigator rectangle starts a navigator scrub, pressing anywhere else starts a hand-pan.

The navigator is shown only while the image overflows the viewport. At Fit, where the whole frame is already on screen, it's hidden so it doesn't clutter the normal cull flow. To disable it entirely, uncheck **Preferences > Viewer > Show overview navigator when zoomed in**; the setting persists across sessions.

Focus and exposure tools

The viewer has three overlays for judging a frame during the cull, each toggled by a single key and each applied to every visible pane (so they work in Compare too):

- **F: focus peaking.** PhotoTaken highlights the parts of the image that are in sharp focus with a colored outline. Instead of zooming to 1:1 on every frame to check sharpness, you glance at the glow: on a burst of a bird or a portrait, the frame where focus landed on the eye lights up where it counts. The sensitivity (how strong an edge has to be before it is treated as in-focus) is set by **Preferences > Viewer > Focus peaking sensitivity**; lower values light up more of the frame.
- **E: exposure clipping warnings.** Blown highlights (pixels at or above the highlight threshold) are painted red, and crushed shadows (pixels at or below the shadow threshold) are painted blue, so a frame that has lost detail at either end is obvious at a glance. Both thresholds are in **Preferences > Viewer**.
- **H: histogram.** A small luminance-plus-RGB histogram appears in the top-left corner and updates as you move through frames.

These tools read the on-screen preview image, which for a raw file is the camera's embedded preview. That makes them a fast, dependable triage aid for the cull, but not a precise read of the raw sensor data (a highlight that looks clipped in the preview may still hold recoverable detail in the raw file).

Preview vs RAW analysis

For RAW files, **Preferences > Viewer > Focus & Exposure Overlays** has a **Read actual RAW sensor data (slower)** checkbox (on by default):

- **On (default):** the F, H, and E overlays read the actual demosaiced RAW data (a half-size decode, with no auto-brighten applied), so highlight headroom shows honestly rather than through the preview's baked-in rendering. The half-size decode is fast enough that this is the default. Applies to RAW files only; non-RAW files always use the preview. For a RAW+JPEG pair the tile and info bar name the JPEG, but the overlays read the paired RAW, so the exposure check is honest on paired shots as well as on standalone RAW files.

- **Off:** the overlays read the embedded JPEG preview instead. This is the lightest option for triage, but it is not a raw sensor read (a highlight that looks blown in the preview may still hold recoverable detail in the raw file).

The same group has color pickers for the overlays: a **Focus peaking color** for the F overlay, and separate **highlight** and **shadow** colors for the exposure clipping (E) overlay. Swap them from the defaults (red peaking, red blown highlights, blue crushed shadows) to whatever stands out best against your subject matter.

On the thumbnails

The same three keys work on the **contact sheet**, so you can judge focus and exposure across a whole shoot at a glance without opening each frame. Click into the grid and press **F**, **E**, or **H** to overlay focus peaking, exposure clipping, or a histogram on the thumbnails (the histogram fills each tile, so toggle it off to see the photos again). The grid toggles are independent of the viewer's and reset to off when you restart. Only the thumbnails currently in view are analyzed and each result is cached, so it stays fast on large folders. On the grid these read the thumbnail (for a RAW file, the camera's embedded preview rather than the raw sensor data), which is plenty for an at-a-glance check; open the frame in the viewer for the true-RAW read described above.

Tagging inside the viewer

All the contact-sheet tagging shortcuts work inside the viewer for the image you're currently viewing:

- **0-5**, set / clear star rating.
- Color letters (**R**, **G**, **B**, etc.), apply color tag. \ clears.

The tag writes to XMP the same way a grid-side tag write does (see Chapter 12). On Esc, the contact sheet shows the new tag on the image's thumbnail.

For mouse-driven tagging, **right-click** the image in the viewer for a popup menu with two submenus:

- **Color Tag**, pick from the 17-color palette, or **None** to clear.
- **Star Rating**, pick 1 through 5, or **None** to clear.

Changes sync to the contact sheet and to disk immediately.

Press **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** to undo a tag change made in the Viewer. It reverts on the same shared undo history as the contact sheet (see Chapter 23), and both the Viewer's info bar and the contact sheet tile update immediately.

Deleting inside the viewer

Press **Delete** to remove the currently-viewed image. A confirmation dialog lists the filename (and its RAW/DNG siblings if it's a paired or multi-RAW tile). Click **Yes** to delete.

After a successful delete:

- On a local drive, the file(s) go to the Windows Recycle Bin (with the Recycle Bin sound). The viewer advances to the **next** image in the folder order.
- If you were already on the last image, the viewer closes and returns to the grid.
- If the folder had only one image and you deleted it, the viewer closes and the grid shows an empty folder.

Press **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** to undo the delete. The file restores from the Recycle Bin and the viewer re-opens on it so you can immediately see it came back. This is the same shared undo history covered in Chapter 23, so it also undoes the most recent tag change if that happened more recently than the delete.

EXIF orientation

If the camera recorded a portrait (vertical) orientation in the file's EXIF, the viewer honors it, portrait images display tall rather than sideways-landscape. This uses the same EXIF Orientation tag that drives the **Rotate** action (see Chapter 22), so rotations applied in PhotoTaken or externally show up correctly in the viewer without re-encoding the image.

Performance: decode and back-scroll

Full-size image decode is fast for JPEG, slower for RAW (especially for larger bodies like the Z9). Two behaviors keep the viewer responsive:

- **Decode runs on a worker thread.** Opening a large RAW may take a second or two on cold decode; the UI doesn't freeze during that wait. You'll see the placeholder background until the decode finishes, then the image appears.
- **Back-nav is instant.** The viewer keeps a small LRU cache of the most recently decoded full-size images (configurable in Preferences > Performance, see Chapter 26). Walking back through images you've already viewed hits the cache; only forward-nav into new territory pays the decode cost.

Auto-refresh from disk edits

If you save changes to an image externally while the viewer is open on it, for example, you edit it in Photoshop and save, PhotoTaken detects the change and re-decodes the file in the viewer within about a second. You see the new bits without having to close and reopen the viewer.

What the viewer is not

The viewer is a display, analysis, and tagging surface (it shows the focus-peaking, exposure-clipping, and histogram overlays described above, and it can apply lossless rotation), but it does not:

- Crop or otherwise edit the image bitmap.
- Apply RAW development or color adjustments.
- Compare against an external reference.

For any of those jobs, drag the tile out to Photoshop, Lightroom, or your editor of choice. The viewer's job is triage: choose your best images, tag them, move on.

14. Compare mode

Compare is the side-by-side viewer. It's what you reach for when the grid's thumbnails are too small to tell near-duplicates apart, bracketed exposures, consecutive shutter clicks during a group photo, eyes-open vs. eyes-closed variants, or the candidates for the same delivered image where you need to pick one.



Compare mode: two very similar frames side by side, so you can pick the sharper, better-exposed one.

Opening compare

Select **two, three, or four** thumbnails in the contact sheet. The Compare button on the toolbar (and the **C** keyboard shortcut) becomes enabled. Click **Compare** or press **C**.

The window switches to compare mode. **Two** images render side by side, each filling its half of the window. **Three or four** images fill a **2x2 grid** (three images leave the fourth cell empty), which is what you reach for to choose the best image from a four-frame burst without bouncing between pairs. A thin info bar runs across the bottom of each pane showing its filename, color tag swatch, and star rating (same info bar as the single-image viewer, one per pane).

Compare accepts two to four selected images. Selecting one, or five or more, makes the Compare button inactive: one image has nothing to compare against, and more than four panes get too small to judge. The 2x2 grid is the practical ceiling.

Pane focus

At any moment the panes are either **all synced** or a single pane is **focused**. A subtle white highlight marks the focused pane; when synced, none is highlighted. The **Tab** key cycles focus:

1. **All panes synced** (default on open). Keyboard nav and zoom move every pane together.
2. **Each pane in turn**. Tab steps focus to the first pane, then the next, and so on through however many panes are open (two, three, or four). Keyboard nav and zoom move only the focused pane; the others stay put.

After the last pane, Tab returns to all-synced and the cycle repeats.

The individual-pane focus is what makes Compare actually useful. You can leave the other candidates fixed, scroll through alternatives in one pane, and judge them one at a time.

Navigation

Left / Right arrows (and the mouse wheel) step the focused pane through the folder in the current sort order. When all panes are synced, they step together (useful for walking a sequence of bracketed shots). With a single pane focused, only that pane moves. Zoom (Z, +/-, Ctrl/Cmd+wheel) follows the same rule: synced zooms every pane in lockstep, focused zooms just one.

The panes respect any active **filter** on the contact sheet the same way the single-image viewer does.

Tagging in compare

Right-click any pane for a popup menu with Color Tag and Star Rating submenus, identical to the single-image viewer. The tag applies to **that pane's image only**, Compare is the rare case where a tag shortcut does NOT act on the contact sheet's selection. That's intentional: the whole point of Compare is that you're about to pick one of them, so the tag should go on exactly the one you right-clicked.

Keyboard tagging shortcuts (1-5 for rating, 0 to clear rating, letter keys for colors, \ to clear color) apply to whichever pane is focused. Press **Tab** until the highlight is on the pane you want, then press the shortcut key. While all panes are synced the keyboard tag shortcuts are a deliberate no-op so a single keypress can never tag every image at once; press Tab once to pick a pane and the shortcut becomes active.

Auto-refresh from disk edits

Compare mode responds to external saves the same way the single-image viewer does. If you edit one of the displayed images in Photoshop (or any other external tool) and save while Compare is open, that pane reloads within about a second. The other pane is unaffected if its file did not change.

Exiting compare

Press **Esc** or click the close button. The main window returns to the contact sheet with **every photo you were comparing still selected**, exactly as you left the grid. The keyboard's current photo lands on the left-hand one, so arrow keys resume from there.

Because the whole set stays selected, a grid action taken straight after **Esc** applies to all of them: a rating or color key tags every compared photo at once, and Delete removes all of them (the confirmation names the count and lists the files, unless you have turned the Recycle Bin confirmation off in **Preferences > Files**). That is deliberate, it's how you rate a set of near-identical frames in one keypress. If you want to act on just one, click it first.

Why Delete is disabled in compare

Delete is **intentionally disabled** inside Compare mode. When you're A/B-ing two shots, pressing Delete without thinking, maybe you were going to delete something and accidentally hit it, risks destroying whichever image was focused. Because the whole point of the mode is that you're making a close-call judgment, we'd rather you be deliberate: exit Compare with

Esc, click the one you decided against, then press Delete there. (Esc brings back the whole compared set still selected, so click the loser first rather than pressing Delete straight away, which would take all of them.)

This is the only mode in PhotoTaken where Delete is inactive on purpose. If you wish it weren't, let us know (support@lormarsoft.com), we've weighted the design toward caution but we're open to being wrong.

15. Slideshow mode

Slideshow is the viewer in auto-advance mode. It's useful for client review (showing a selection at full size without having to click through each one), for a final pass on your selects, and for checking continuity across a sequence where you want each shot to sit on screen for the same amount of time.

Starting a slideshow

Select **two or more** thumbnails in the contact sheet. The Slideshow button on the toolbar (and the **F5** shortcut) becomes enabled. Click **Slideshow** or press **F5**.

The window switches to the single-image viewer, opened on the first image in the selection (in contact-sheet sort order). Auto-advance starts immediately, each image displays for the configured interval before the next one takes over.

Slideshow requires two or more selected images. One image doesn't make a slideshow; zero has nothing to show. The button disables accordingly.

Setting the interval

The slideshow interval is controlled in **Preferences** → **Viewer** (see Chapter 26). The knob is a spinbox that accepts values from **0.5 to 60 seconds**, in half-second steps. The default is 4.0 seconds, long enough to take in an image, short enough that a 50-image review doesn't drag.

The interval persists across sessions. Next slideshow picks up the same interval.

Controls during a slideshow

Three keyboard controls during playback:

- **Space**, pause and resume auto-advance. While paused, the current image stays on screen until you press Space again (or use the arrows to step manually).
- **Left / Right arrow**, step manually to the previous / next image in the selection. This also **resets the interval timer** for the new image, so you get a full viewing window rather than the tail end of the previous auto-advance.
- **Esc**, exit the slideshow and return to the contact sheet. The contact sheet's selection is unchanged, the selected tiles you started from are still selected.

Mouse wheel and Tab don't do anything in slideshow mode; the mode is deliberately keyboard-simple.

Slideshow info bar

The same info bar as the single-image viewer shows at the bottom of the slideshow window: filename, color tag, star rating. This lets you see at a glance whether the current slide is already a pick or still untagged.

Tagging during a slideshow

The same keyboard shortcuts that tag inside the viewer work inside the slideshow, press **5** to 5-star the current slide, **G** to color-tag Green, and so on. The tag writes immediately to XMP; nothing interrupts playback.

If you're running a slideshow specifically to do a review pass, use Space to pause when a shot deserves more time, tag it, then press Space again to resume. The interval timer restarts on resume.

Exiting

Press **Esc**. You return to the contact sheet with your original selection intact. Any tags you applied during the slideshow are visible on the thumbnails immediately.

Demoing and screen-recording the slideshow

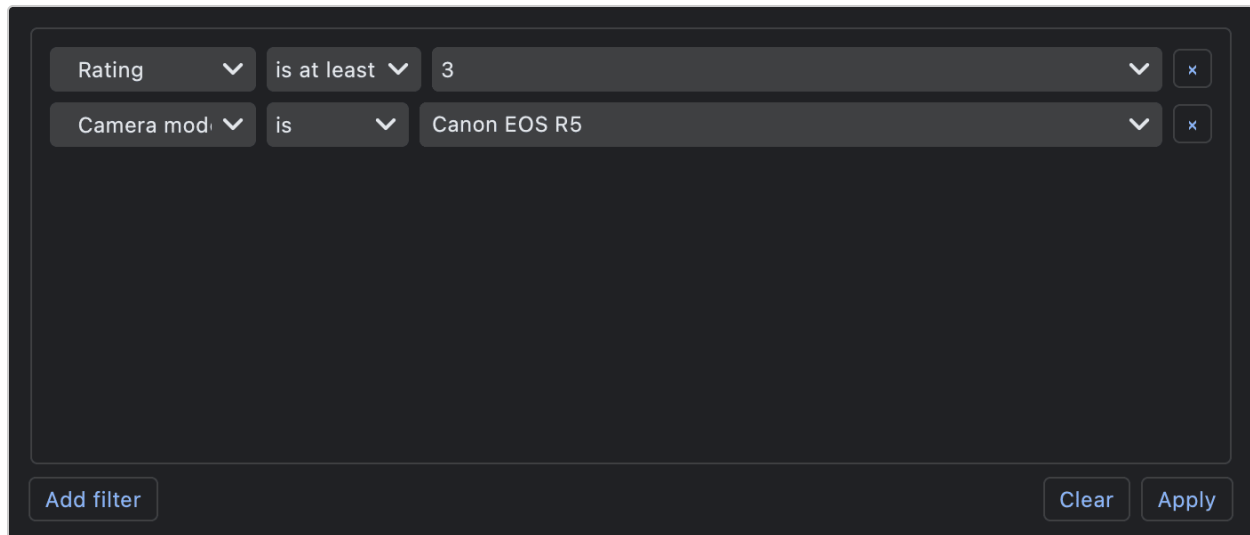
By default the slideshow takes over the whole screen, which is the right behavior for review work but a poor fit for a screen recording: viewers of the recording can rarely see a full-screen capture comfortably. **Preferences > Viewer > Open viewer and slideshow at main window size** flips that. With it on, the slideshow (and the single-image Viewer) open at the current main window's size instead of going full screen. Resize the main window to roughly half your screen, turn the option on, and a recording cropped to that region captures the slideshow at a comfortable size with the surrounding desktop hidden. Turn the option back off when you're done recording.

When to use Slideshow vs. plain Viewer

Use **Slideshow** when you want a hands-free walk through a selection with the same per-image time budget. Use the **plain Viewer** (Enter on a thumbnail) when you're reviewing at your own pace, need to dwell on each shot, or want the mouse wheel for nav.

16. Filtering the contact sheet

PhotoTaken has three filter dropdowns on the contact sheet's filter row, **Color**, **Rating**, and **File Type**. Together they narrow the visible grid to the subset of images you want to focus on, without mutating the folder on disk.



The Filters builder, with a rating and camera model row.

The color filter

A dropdown in the filter row with these options:

- **All**: no color filter (every image visible regardless of tag).
- **Untagged**: only images with no color tag.
- **Tagged**: only images that carry a color tag, regardless of which color.
- Each of the 17 colors from the PhotoTaken palette (see Chapter 12 for the full list), each shown with its swatch icon.

Picking a color hides every image that doesn't carry that exact color. Picking **Untagged** hides every image that has any color tag, leaving only the ones that haven't been tagged yet. Picking **Tagged** does the opposite: it hides every untagged image and shows all color-tagged images at once, whatever colors they are. Picking **All** clears the filter.

Typical use:

- During a first cull pass, apply **Red** or **Green** as you decide, then switch the filter to the color you care about to focus on your picks (or rejects).
- During a second pass, use **Untagged** to hunt down images you haven't yet rated or colored.
- Use **Tagged** to review everything you've flagged in one view without committing to a single color, handy when you tag with several colors and want to see the whole shortlist.

The rating filter

A single dropdown in the filter row that filters by star rating in two modes, **exact** and **threshold**:

- **Any**, no rating filter.
- **Unrated (no stars)**, show only images with exactly zero stars, the shots you haven't rated yet.
- **★ exactly 1** through **★★★★★ exactly 5**, show only images carrying precisely that star count. **exactly 1** is the classic "rejects" view if you mark culls with one star.
- **≥ 1** through **≥ 5**, the threshold mode, show images at that rating or higher. **≥ 1** hides only the unrated; **≥ 4** and **≥ 5** narrow to your top picks.

The exact entries (top of the list) and the threshold entries (bottom) live in the same dropdown so you never need a second control. The difference matters: **exactly 1** shows *only* the one-star shots, while **≥ 1** shows everything one-star-and-up. Picking **Any** clears the filter.

Typical use:

- During a cull, switch to **Unrated** to find the shots you still haven't looked at, then back to **Any** when you're done.
- If you flag rejects with one star, **exactly 1** gives you a clean reject reel to review before deleting.
- When selecting final deliverables, set **≥ 4** or **≥ 5** to see only your top picks.

The file-type filter

A third dropdown in the filter row, **File Type**, lists the formats actually present in the currently open folder. Its values are assembled dynamically when you open a folder and reset to **All** when you switch folders.

With the thumbnail grid focused, press **D** to cycle this dropdown forward (All → JPEG → RAW → ... → All) and **Shift+D** to cycle it backward, so you can flip through "what file types am I Displaying" without reaching for the mouse.

Values and when they appear:

- **All**: no file-type filter (every shot visible, default).
- **JPEG**: appears when any shot in the folder has a JPEG component.
- **RAW (any)**: appears when any shot has a RAW component in any format. This is always the generic label regardless of which specific RAW format is present.
- **NEF**, **DNG**, **CR2**, and the other specific RAW format names: each appears as its own entry when at least one shot carries that format. A folder that started as JPEG+NEF and later gained DNGs from a Convert to DNG run (with originals kept) shows both **NEF** and **DNG** alongside **RAW (any)**.
- **HEIC**, **TIFF**, **PNG**, **WebP**, **AVIF**, **GIF**, **BMP**, **PSD**, **PDF**, **Video**: each appears only when files of that type are present in the folder.

How paired shots are matched:

Each specific type filter shows every tile that contains the selected format. Paired tiles (a JPEG primary with a NEF, DNG, or other RAW sibling) appear under every filter that matches one of their file types. A JPG+NEF pair shows under both **JPEG** and **NEF** (and **RAW (any)**), but not under **DNG** or **Video** since the pair doesn't carry those formats.

Filter-aware moves on paired shots:

Dragging or moving tiles under a specific type filter moves only the matching component of each pair:

- Filtered to **NEF** (or **RAW (any)**): dragging a JPG+NEF tile moves only the NEF file to the destination. The JPEG stays in the source folder and the tile updates to show as a standalone JPEG.
- Filtered to **JPEG**: dragging a JPG+NEF tile moves only the JPEG. The NEF stays.
- Under **All**: the full pair always moves together (the previous behavior is unchanged).

This lets you split a RAW+JPEG shoot by format without having to manually separate the files beforehand. For example: filter to **NEF**, select all, drag to a "RAW archive" folder, and only the NEF files land there while the JPEGs remain for sharing.

Typical use:

- After a Convert to DNG run with "keep originals," filter to **DNG** to confirm which shots were converted, then filter to **NEF** to review or move the originals.
- In a mixed shoot that includes video clips, filter to **Video** to see and move only the clips.
- To split a RAW+JPEG shoot so only the RAW files go to a long-term archive: filter to **RAW (any)**, select all, drag to the archive folder.

Combining filters

All three filters are **ANDed together**. If you set **Color: Red**, **Rating: ≥ 4** , and **File Type: RAW (any)**, the grid shows only images that are red-tagged, rated 4-or-higher, and have at least one RAW file. An image tagged Red with 3 stars is hidden; an image rated 5 with no color tag is hidden; a JPEG-only 5-star red shot is hidden because it has no RAW.

There are three filters in total. No saved filter presets, no user-defined composites, no query language. The simplicity is deliberate; if your workflow needs more than color, rating, and file type to cull, the missing dimension should probably be a color (that's why there are 17 of them).

Status-bar visible count

When any filter is active, the status bar shows a visible-count readout next to the total:

3,218 images • 412 visible

If all three filters are set to their neutral values (**All**, **Any**, and **All** for File Type), the visible count disappears, visible equals total, no need to say it.

Filtering does not mutate selection

Applying a filter doesn't change what's selected in the grid, it just changes which selected items are **visible**. If you had 50 images selected and you apply a filter that hides 47 of them, you still have 50 selected; only 3 are visible. Change the filter back to **All** and your original 50 are still there as the selection.

Why this matters: you can select broadly (say, the whole folder), filter to just the 5-star images, and perform an operation (drag, tag apply, delete) on only the visible subset IF the operation offers a "selected visible" path. Where it doesn't, the whole 50 is still the selection, be careful.

In practice, most operations act on the selection directly, so a common pattern is: filter to what you want, **Ctrl/Cmd+A** to select everything visible, then act. This is clearer than relying on "selected but invisible" semantics.

Filters are per-tab

Each open tab remembers its own filter state. Switching between tabs is cheap precisely because filter state (along with scroll and selection) is cached per tab.

Filter state does **not** persist across app restarts. Every tab you reopen starts with **All / Any**, a fresh filter, every session, so you always know what you're looking at.

Searching across folders

The filter row narrows what you see inside the **current** folder. The toolbar **Search** box reaches **across folders**, the active tab, every open tab, or every folder you've ever visited, and drops matches into a synthetic **Search Results** tab.

Using it

- Click the Search box on the toolbar, or press **Ctrl/Cmd+F** from anywhere in the main window to jump focus there and select whatever was typed before.
- Type one or more words separated by spaces.
- Say where to look, with the **Search** button on the search row (to the right of the Search box) or a shortcut: **Enter** searches wherever the button says, **Shift+Enter** searches open folders, **Ctrl/Cmd+Enter** searches everything. The button's arrow opens a short list (**This Folder / Open Folders / Everything**) and each entry's tooltip spells its shortcut the way your platform writes it, so Everything reads **⌘⇧** on a Mac and **Ctrl+Return** on Windows.

Where it will look is written on the button itself rather than tucked away in Preferences, so a remembered choice can never quietly disagree with what you are about to do: the label is the answer to "where will this look", and it is the thing you are clicking. It replaced three side-by-side buttons that had to be read and chosen between on every single search. **This Folder's** entry names the folder it would search.

A new tab appears in the Tabs strip with a magnifier glyph (🔍) and your query text, and where it searched on a dimmer second line beneath it. The contact sheet rebuilds to show every hit, and the status bar reports how many results were found.

That second line matters because where you searched is part of a search's identity: running `iso:>3200` in one folder and then again across **Everything** gives you two separate tabs, and without it the two would look identical in the strip. A **This Folder** search names its folder there ("shoot") rather than saying "this tab", which on a results tab would point at the tab you're standing on instead of the folder that was searched. Searching two different folders for the same query likewise gives two tabs, each named for its own folder. The results header above the grid states it too, along with the match count ("12 results in shoot"), and hovering a search tab shows the same as a tooltip.

What counts as a match

Whitespace splits your query into **tokens** (quote a phrase like "golden gate" to keep it as one token). Each token is either a plain word or a `field:value` operator; every token in the query must match for a file to be returned.

Plain words match, case-insensitively, against:

- the filename,
- keywords (XMP `dc:Subject` / IPTC `Keywords` , edited via **Edit IPTC Info...**, **Ctrl/Cmd+I**, or stamped via a Stationery Pad),
- the descriptive metadata fields: caption, creator, copyright, credit, headline, and place (city/state/country),
- and, as a catch-all, any other metadata value stored for the photo: a lens name, a light source, or any other camera-embedded value, even one without its own operator.

One field is deliberately left out of that catch-all: Software (shown as **Firmware** in the Metadata panel). It records the program or camera firmware that last wrote the file, and matching it did more harm than good. An edited photo carries its editor, so searching `2015` returned shots taken in 2020 whose Software read "Adobe Photoshop CC 2015 (Windows)". Camera firmware is the bigger half: it is on nearly every file and is mostly digits, so a search for `1.13` could sweep in tens of thousands of unrelated photos with nothing on screen explaining why. Search it on purpose with `software:photoshop` and it works exactly as before.

Typing `sunset beach` finds any file that covers both words across those fields, they don't have to come from the same field.

A year behaves the same way, which is usually what you want: `2013` finds photos taken in 2013 (the capture date is one of those stored metadata values) as well as anything with 2013 in its name or keywords. It will occasionally also turn up a frame shot at ISO 2013 or 2013 mm, which is the honest price of a single box that searches everything; four-digit years rarely collide with anything else.

Dates in plain English. Type a date the way you would say it out loud and PhotoTaken reads it as a date:

You type	It finds
July 2013	everything taken in July 2013
Jul 2013	the same, month names may be abbreviated
July 4 2013	everything taken on 4 July 2013
July 4, 2013	the same, the comma is optional
4 July 2013	the same, day-first works too
2013 July	the same month, either order
2013-07 or 2013-7	everything taken in July 2013
2013-07-04 or 2013-7-4	everything taken on 4 July 2013

In the written forms the month must be spelled (or abbreviated) rather than given as a number, which is what keeps 7/4/2013 from being read as April 7th in half the world.

July 4th 2013 works as well.

The numeric forms are the exception, and only because the year comes first: 2013-07-04 means the same thing in every country, so there is nothing to guess. That leading four-digit year is also what keeps a lens (24-70) or a focal range (70-200) from being mistaken for a date.

A date phrase matches a photo **taken** then **or** one whose name or keywords carry that phrase, so a poster file named "July 2013" still turns up even though it was made years later. Other words in the box still narrow the result the usual way: wedding July 2013 asks for both. A date that cannot exist (February 30 2013) is left alone as ordinary search text rather than silently matching nothing.

The date: operator below is still there for exact ranges (date:2013-07-04 , date:2013-01..2013-06); the plain-English form is the one you reach for without thinking about syntax.

Operators narrow by a specific piece of metadata:

Operator	Field	EXIF or IPTC/XMP	Example
<code>camera: (or model:)</code>	Camera model	EXIF	<code>camera:"EOS R5"</code>
<code>make:</code>	Camera manufacturer	EXIF	<code>make:canon</code>
<code>lens:</code>	Lens name	EXIF	<code>lens:70-200</code>
<code>iso:</code>	ISO. Supports <code>></code> , <code>>=</code> , <code><</code> , <code><=</code> , and <code>A..B</code> ranges	EXIF	<code>iso:>3200</code> , <code>iso:100..400</code>
<code>aperture: (or fstop:)</code>	Aperture / f-stop, same comparisons as <code>iso:</code>	EXIF	<code>aperture:<2.8</code>
<code>shutter:</code>	Shutter speed in seconds, same comparisons as <code>iso:</code>	EXIF	<code>shutter:<0.001</code> , <code>shutter:>1</code>
<code>focal: (or focallength:)</code>	Focal length, same comparisons as <code>iso:</code>	EXIF	<code>focal:200</code>
<code>focal_length_35mm:</code>	Focal length, 35mm equivalent, same comparisons as <code>iso:</code>	EXIF	<code>focal_length_35mm:>=200</code>
<code>exposure_comp:</code>	Exposure compensation in EV, same comparisons as <code>iso:</code>	EXIF	<code>exposure_comp:>=1</code>
<code>exposure_program:</code>	Exposure program (e.g. Aperture-priority)	EXIF	<code>exposure_program:"Aperture-priority"</code>

Operator	Field	EXIF or IPTC/XMP	Example
<code>exposure_mode:</code>	Exposure mode (e.g. Auto, Manual)	EXIF	<code>exposure_mode:auto</code>
<code>metering_mode:</code>	Metering mode	EXIF	<code>metering_mode:"Multi-segment"</code>
<code>white_balance:</code>	White balance	EXIF	<code>white_balance:auto</code>
<code>flash:</code>	Flash description as recorded by the camera	EXIF	<code>flash:"Off, Did not fire"</code>
<code>flash_fired:</code>	Whether flash fired, yes / no	EXIF	<code>flash_fired:yes</code>
<code>color_space:</code>	Color space	EXIF	<code>color_space:srgb</code>
<code>orientation:</code>	Image orientation	EXIF	<code>orientation:horizontal</code>
<code>width: / height:</code>	Image dimensions in pixels, same comparisons as <code>iso:</code>	EXIF	<code>width:>=4000</code>
<code>date:</code>	Date taken: a year, year-month, full date, or an A..B range	EXIF	<code>date:2024-06</code> , <code>date:2024-01..2024-03</code>
<code>type: (or filetype:)</code>	File type	filename extension	<code>type:raw</code> , <code>type:jpg</code>
<code>rating:</code>	Star rating, same comparisons as <code>iso:</code>	PhotoTaken tag	<code>rating:>=4</code>
<code>place:</code>	City, state, or country	IPTC location	<code>place:paris</code>

Operator	Field	EXIF or IPTC/XMP	Example
<code>keyword:</code> (or <code>kw:</code>)	Keywords only, nothing else	IPTC/XMP	<code>keyword:owl</code>
<code>creator:</code> (or <code>artist:</code>)	Photographer / creator	IPTC/XMP	<code>creator:lorri</code>
<code>copyright:</code>	Copyright notice	IPTC/XMP	<code>copyright:2024</code>
<code>credit:</code>	Credit line	IPTC/XMP	<code>credit:reuters</code>
<code>headline:</code>	Headline	IPTC/XMP	<code>headline:parade</code>
<code>software:</code>	Software used to process the photo	EXIF	<code>software:lightroom</code>
<code>has:gps</code>	Only files carrying GPS coordinates	EXIF	<code>has:gps</code>

Operators and plain words combine freely in one query, e.g. `sunset iso:>3200 type:raw` finds RAW files shot above ISO 3200 whose name, keywords, or descriptive fields contain "sunset."

`type:raw` matches any of PhotoTaken's 26 supported RAW extensions (see Appendix A, RAW formats), not just a literal `.raw` file.

`shutter:` is stored in seconds, not a "1 over" fraction, so a shutter speed of 1/250 is `0.004`. `shutter:<0.001` finds shots faster than 1/1000; `shutter:>1` finds long exposures over one second.

`keyword:` is the narrow version of typing a plain word. Typing `owl` on its own finds photos keyworded "owl", but also a file named `owlets.jpg` and a caption reading "an owl at dusk". `keyword:owl` matches the keyword and nothing else, which is what you want when you're looking for how you filed a photo rather than what it happens to say. `kw:` is the short form. It matches **whole words** inside a keyword, which is the difference between it and typing the bare word. `keyword:owl` finds a photo tagged "Barn Owl", because "owl" is one of its words. `keyword:mark` does **not** find one tagged "landmark", because "mark" is only part of that word. Hyphens and underscores count as gaps between words, so "barn-owl" answers to `keyword:owl` too. For a looser match on part of a word, type the bare word instead.

The Filters button (build a query without the syntax) ♦

Next to the search box is a **Filters** button. Clicking it opens the filter builder, a popup panel of rows, each row a **field** dropdown (grouped by category: Camera & lens, Exposure, Image, Capture, Location, Description, Other), an **operator** dropdown that changes to fit the field's kind, and a **value** control that adapts automatically:

- A number field (ISO, aperture, shutter, focal length, exposure compensation, dimensions, and so on) gets a spin box, plus a **between** operator for a range.
- An enum field (camera model, lens, white balance, flash, exposure program/mode, metering mode, color space, orientation) gets a dropdown of the actual values present in your library, so you only ever pick values you actually have. Choose **is any of** to pick several values for that one field.
- A text field (camera make, city, state, country, creator, copyright, credit, headline, software) gets an **editable dropdown**: it lists the actual values in your library so you can pick one, and because it is editable you can also type part of a value to match a substring. When a field has nothing indexed yet (for example location, if your photos carry no IPTC place data), it simply acts as a plain typing box.
- A **bool** field (flash fired) gets a yes/no toggle.
- **Date taken** gets a date-range picker (or **on** for a single date).
- **File type** and **rating** keep their existing dropdown/threshold controls; **has GPS** is a single **is set** check.

Click **Add filter** to add another row, every row is combined with **AND**, so "camera is EOS R5" and "ISO at least 3200" and "flash fired is yes" all have to match. The X at the end of a row removes just that row (the last remaining row is kept blank). Press **Put in search box**, or simply **Enter**, to compose the matching query and write it into the search box. It deliberately does **not** search. The builder's job is to hand you a finished query; saying where and when to run it is the **Search** button's job, and separating the two means the builder never has to guess a scope on your behalf. The button used to say **Apply**, which promised results and delivered a closed panel, so it read as though nothing had happened at all. Focus lands in the search box, so **Enter**, **Shift+Enter** (open folders), or **Ctrl/Cmd+Enter** (everything) fires straight away. To tighten a filter you are already looking at the results of, reopen the builder (it is pre-filled), adjust, put it back in the box, and search again: **This Folder** stays available on results that came from a single folder, so it re-searches that same folder. **Clear** empties the builder back to a single blank row, and **Esc** closes it without applying. When a filter is already active (you are on a filtered results tab, or a filter query is in the search box), reopening the builder pre-fills it with that filter, split back out into its rows, so you can refine or build on top of it; any plain search words that aren't filters are kept and re-added when you put it back in the search box, so nothing is lost. Long values in a dropdown are truncated with a hover tooltip for the full text,

and the popup never needs a horizontal scrollbar. The search box remains the source of truth, so you can tweak the composed query by hand afterward. The filter builder is the discoverable front door to everything the operators can do, including fields (like white balance or flash) that don't have a memorable short operator name.

Knowing when the index is ready

By default PhotoTaken indexes each folder as you open it, so there is no big up-front scan and nothing to wait for, search coverage simply grows as you browse. The same indicator also covers the **re-index** that whole-library mode performs after an update that adds new searchable fields, so the new fields become searchable for photos indexed under an older version. Either way, filename search keeps working the whole time.

While a crawl or re-index is running, the status bar at the bottom of the window shows "**Scanning your photo library...**" while it locates your files, then "**Indexing X of Y**" as it reads each one's metadata, and switches to "**Search index ready**" (then clears) when the pass finishes. For a point-in-time total, a Favorite's right-click menu shows how many photos are indexed, how many have full metadata read, and across how many folders.

The three scopes in detail

These are the three settings behind the one **Search** button, chosen from the arrow beside it. The button's label always names the one in force.

- **This Folder (Enter)**, searches just the folder shown on the active tab. Useful when you know where to look and you want a shorter result list.
- **Open Folders (Shift+Enter)**, searches every regular folder tab you currently have open. A Search Results tab is not itself a searchable folder (it contains hits that already passed through a search), so it is skipped. Useful for "find the wedding kisses across this month's shoots."
- **Everything ♦ (Ctrl/Cmd+Enter)**, searches your whole configured library. Your Favorites are always part of this, see Setting up whole-library search below for how Favorites and extra folders get into this index and how quickly.

Open Folders and **Everything** always mean something, so they can always be picked. **This Folder** is the only one that needs a folder to point at, so it greys out when there isn't one:

- On a **folder tab**, it searches that folder.
- On results that came from a **single folder**, it searches that same folder again. This is what makes tightening a filter one click: Apply, then **Enter**.

- On results that came from **Open Folders** or **Everything**, it is disabled. There is no single folder behind such a tab, so rather than guess one (and quietly search somewhere you didn't ask for), PhotoTaken simply doesn't offer it. Click a real folder tab first. If **This Folder** was your remembered choice when that happens, the button moves itself to **Search Everything**: searching wider than you asked is recoverable, while a button that silently finds nothing is not.

Because the button follows you like that, **Enter** always does what the button says.

Indexing folders for search

A folder is indexed when you **open a tab on it**. That is the whole default: nothing crawls at startup, nothing runs on a schedule, and opening PhotoTaken never sets off a long scan. Search coverage grows as you browse.

Two right-click menus cover the rest:

On a tab (in the Tabs strip):

- **Refresh Search Index**, re-reads that one folder. Useful when files changed outside PhotoTaken, for example re-tagging in another tool.

On a Favorite (in the Folders panel):

- **Index This Folder and Subfolders...**, walks the whole tree and indexes every photo under it. PhotoTaken asks you to confirm first, because a Favorite is very often an entire drive and this is the expensive operation. It runs in the background and you can keep working.
- **Index This Folder**, indexes just that folder, no subfolders.
- **Remove from Search Index**, drops that folder's photos back out of search. PhotoTaken confirms first. Your photo files are never touched and you can index it again at any time.

A search that finds nothing tells you what it looked at. Because coverage grows as you browse, an empty result has two very different meanings: no photo matches, or the folder holding the match was never opened. The results header carries a second line for the empty case naming how many folders were actually searched, and how to add more ("Open a folder, or right-click a favorite and index it").

It also names how many of the photos it *did* search are indexed by name only, when there are any. Those are usually photos still in the cloud: PhotoTaken deliberately indexes an undownloaded file without reading its details, because reading them would force a download of every one, so only the filename can match until the file is on the computer. The wording says "indexed by name only" rather than "in the cloud" for a reason worth knowing: nothing in the

index records *why* a photo has no details, and a folder opened seconds ago is briefly in the same state while its details are still being read. Telling the two apart would need a new column and a full re-read of the library, which is not worth it to sharpen one sentence.

The note appears only on an empty result, so a search that worked is never interrupted by it, and it clears as soon as you open a folder or run another search.

There is no indexing mode to choose and no separate list of folders to maintain. Earlier versions had both, under a Preferences **Library** tab, and the list they showed was maintained by hand and never matched the folders actually indexed. Indexing is now driven entirely by what you open and what you explicitly ask for.

Per-file, the crawl reads the same metadata as the Metadata panel and Edit EXIF/IPTC dialogs: camera make/model, lens, ISO, aperture, shutter speed, focal length (including the 35mm equivalent), exposure compensation, exposure program, exposure mode, metering mode, white balance, flash (and whether it fired), color space, orientation, image dimensions, date taken, and GPS presence from EXIF; caption, creator, copyright, credit, headline, software, and city/state/country from IPTC/XMP; plus, as a catch-all, every other metadata value ExifTool reports, searchable as a plain word even without a dedicated field or operator. A file with no metadata (or an EXIF reader failure) still gets its filename indexed, so filename search always works even when a photo's metadata can't be read.

How the index is populated

PhotoTaken indexes in the background, never as a separate step. Every time you open a folder:

1. The folder scan reads filenames, stats, and the per-folder tag cache (colors and ratings).
2. As soon as the grid finishes drawing, PhotoTaken **seeds** the search index with a row for every file: filename, path, rating, and color. Filename searches against this folder work immediately, you don't have to wait for the background readers to catch up.
3. Two background readers then walk the folder's files in parallel: the XMP reader picks up authoritative ratings, labels, and keywords, while a second reader reads the full EXIF/IPTC field set described above (camera, lens, exposure settings, date taken, GPS, dimensions, and the descriptive fields) with ExifTool. This second reader runs on every folder open, it's what makes a folder's operator search work as soon as you look at a folder.
4. As each reader finishes, PhotoTaken updates that folder's index rows with what it found. From this point on, keyword and operator searches across this folder also hit. A file whose metadata hasn't changed since a prior visit is skipped on the second pass, so reopening an already-indexed folder stays fast.

5. Entries whose files have since disappeared on disk are dropped from the index the next time you visit the folder.

There's a small window, typically a few seconds on a large folder, between step 2 and step 4 where a keyword or operator search may not yet reflect the just-opened (or just-crawled) folder.

PhotoTaken handles this for you: any active Search Results tab automatically re-runs its query every time a batch of folders finishes indexing, so matches fill in on their own without you having to re-submit. You'll see the tab's result count and the grid update in place as indexing catches up.

The same auto-refresh fires after any folder change PhotoTaken notices: IPTC editor saves, Stationery Pad applies, or an external tool modifying files. When the file-system watcher triggers a revalidate and sees updated modification times, the search index's rows for those files are refreshed and the active Search Results tab reruns with the new data. You don't have to manually reload a folder to keep search in sync with what's on disk.

Folders you have never opened and never indexed from a Favorite are not in the index and won't appear in **Everything** searches. Open the folder once, or index it from its Favorite's right-click menu, and it stays searchable from then on (even across restarts).

If ExifTool isn't installed, EXIF/IPTC-based operators (`camera:` , `iso:` , `place:` , and so on) won't have metadata to match against, but filename and keyword search keep working normally.

Keeping the index tidy

The index only ever adds rows automatically, so PhotoTaken prunes it in three separate ways, all governed by one safety rule: **a photo is only ever pruned when its drive is currently connected and a local check confirms the file is actually gone**. A photo on a drive that's simply unplugged, or on a network share that isn't reachable right now, is never touched, unplugging a backup drive never wipes it from search, and everything on it is searchable again the moment you reconnect.

- **Removing a folder from the index.** Right-click a Favorite and choose **Remove from Search Index**. If it (or a subfolder of it) has indexed photos that aren't still covered by another remaining Favorite or extra folder, a dialog lists the removed folder(s) with a photo count and asks whether to also remove them from search. The default choice is **Keep in index**; choosing **Remove from index** deletes those rows only, your actual photo files are never touched, and re-adding the folder later re-indexes it from scratch. A removed subfolder whose parent is still a Favorite or extra folder is skipped entirely, since its photos are still reachable through the parent.

- **The startup sweep.** Every time PhotoTaken launches, a background pass checks the index against your currently connected local folders and drops rows for any photo that's been deleted or moved outside the app. If anything was cleared, the status bar briefly shows a note like "Removed 3 missing photos from the search index."
- **Verify on click.** Opening a search result whose file has since disappeared no longer just fails. If the drive is connected and the file is confirmed gone, the result is dropped from the list with a short note; if the drive isn't connected, PhotoTaken tells you that instead and leaves the result in place, since the file may well still be there once the drive is back.

Working inside a Search Results tab

The results grid uses the same thumbnail layout, selection behavior, and double-click-to-viewer as a regular folder tab. What's different:

- **Ratings, color tags, renames, and deletes** are intentionally inert or folder-scoped inside the results view, treat it as a browsing surface while MVP, not an editing surface. If you need to tag or rename, double-click into the viewer or switch to the real folder tab (the file's path is in the tile's tooltip and Metadata panel).
- The result list is a snapshot from when you pressed Enter. Adding keywords or renaming files doesn't change what the current Search Results tab displays. To refresh, run the search again.
- Results are sorted alphabetically by filename for determinism; the sort dropdown above the grid can reorder them the usual way.

Closing and reopening

- The **x** button, **Ctrl/Cmd+W**, and the tab's right-click menu all close a Search Results tab.
- The **Reopen Closed Tab** action (**Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+T**) doesn't reopen search tabs, type the query again if you want it back.

Search tabs survive a restart

Any Search Results tab still open when you quit is restored the next time you launch PhotoTaken, appearing as a placeholder showing its original query. A restored tab is inert until you select it: opening it re-runs the query against the current library and shows current results, and switching away and back doesn't run it again. The tab remembers the exact folders its search originally covered, so a **This Folder** or **Open Folders** search restores faithfully even if you've since opened or closed different tabs. If nothing in the library matches anymore, the restored tab just shows **0 results** rather than disappearing. If a Search Results tab was the active tab when you quit, it runs automatically on launch instead of waiting for a click.

Practical recipes

- **Find a family name across the year: Search Everything**, query `Smith wedding` . Matches any file whose name, keywords, or descriptive fields contain both words.
 - **Quickly jump to a file in this shoot: Search This Folder**, query `0421` . The results tab shows every file whose name contains `0421` .
 - **Pull together every session for a client from open tabs: Search Open Folders**, query `Anderson` . Scroll the results tab as a virtual folder of everything across the session you have open.
 - **Find every high-ISO shot from a shoot you never opened:** right-click its Favorite and choose **Index This Folder and Subfolders...** first, otherwise add it from its Favorite's right-click menu with **Index This Folder and Subfolders...**, then search **Everything**, query `iso:>3200` .
 - **Find every RAW file with a location tagged, from any camera: Search Everything**, query `has:gps type:raw` .
-

Part V, Metadata

17. Reading metadata

The **Metadata panel** on the right side of the window shows capture and IPTC data for the currently-selected image. This chapter walks every field it exposes, explains where each field lives in the standards PhotoTaken reads, and covers a few behaviors that keep the panel useful on slow disks and large RAWs.

Filename:	IMG_1001.jpg
Dimensions:	1,024 × 819 px
DPI:	300 dpi
ICC Profile:	sRGB built-in
Quality:	JPEG
▶ Camera Capture	
Date:	2025/09/14
Time:	09:00:00
Model:	Canon EOS R5
Lens:	RF24-70mm F2.8 L IS USM
Lens (mm):	35mm
ISO:	100
Aperture:	f/8
Shutter:	1/250s
▼ IPTC / Description	
Creator:	Riley Chen
Caption:	Snow-covered alpine peaks under a clear winter sky
Copyright:	5 Riley Chen. Sample image, CC0 source.
Keywords:	mountains, snow, alpine, winter, landscape
Save Caption / Copyright	

The metadata panel for a selected photo.

Three sections

The panel stacks three sections top to bottom:

1. **File** (always visible), the file's identity. Filename, Dimensions, DPI, ICC Profile, Quality.
2. **Camera & Capture** (collapsible, click the header to toggle), the capture data the camera recorded. Date, Time, GPS, Make / Model, Serial, Firmware, Frame Count, Lens, ISO, Aperture, Shutter, Focal Length, Exposure Comp, Flash Comp, Program, Focus Mode, White Balance, Contrast, Sharpening.
3. **IPTC / Description** (collapsible), the descriptive metadata. Creator + Creator email / phone / website, Credit, Source, Rights Usage, Headline, **Caption** (editable), **Copyright** (editable), Instructions, City, Sublocation, State / Province, Country, Keywords.

The **Camera & Capture** collapse state persists across sessions. The **IPTC / Description** section's default is computed per file: collapsed when the file has no IPTC data, expanded when it does, Lorri's "default IPTC collapsed only if all empty" rule. Manually toggling either section sticks for that file; switching to a different file resets the IPTC section to the auto rule.

When a section is collapsed, its header shows a small count of how many populated rows are inside, so you can tell at a glance whether there's anything worth opening.

Empty fields are hidden

Empty rows in the Camera and IPTC sections are hidden so the panel only shows what's actually in the file. Open a card-fresh JPEG with no IPTC stamping yet and the IPTC section just doesn't show, there's nothing to render. Open a file the photographer has tagged through Edit IPTC Info or a Stationery Pad, and the populated fields appear in the order above.

The **File** section's rows always show, because the filename and dimensions are the file's identity, leaving them blank would be confusing. **Caption** and **Copyright** stay visible too because they're editable: hiding the editor would force you to type into nothing.

Editable fields

Two IPTC fields are editable directly in the panel (the full editor is next chapter):

- **Caption**, multi-line.
- **Copyright**, one line.

The Save button writes both at once. For the rest of the IPTC field set (creator, credit, location, keywords, etc.), use **Edit IPTC Info** (Chapter 19), that dialog supports multi-file editing, mixed-value handling, and writes the full set in one operation.

The GPS link

If the image has GPS coordinates, the **Latitude** and **Longitude** fields are clickable. Clicking either opens the default browser to a map view centered on the coordinates. The clickable affordance matches what you'd expect from a link (underlined text, pointer cursor on hover).

This is strictly a "take me to the map" convenience; PhotoTaken doesn't embed a map inline, doesn't reverse-geocode to a city name, and doesn't modify the GPS tag. A proper in-panel map view is on the roadmap.

Reads happen on a background thread

Metadata reads go through ExifTool, which is a subprocess call. On a first read of a given image, the call can take tens of milliseconds for a JPEG and a few hundred for a large RAW. That's fast by shell-command standards but slow enough to be visible if it blocked the UI thread.

PhotoTaken reads metadata **on a background thread**. What that means in practice:

- The **Filename** field of the panel updates immediately on selection change. It doesn't need to hit disk; PhotoTaken already knows the path.
- The rest of the fields populate a fraction of a second later, as ExifTool returns.
- Rapid arrow-key navigation across the grid doesn't queue a long backlog of reads, a stale-in-flight read for an image you've already moved past is discarded when its result arrives.

You can keep culling at full speed. The Metadata panel never makes you wait.

What happens with multi-select

If you select more than one image, the Metadata panel doesn't show the fields for any one of them, showing one file's metadata during a multi-select would be misleading. Instead the panel stays largely empty, with a note that there's a multi-file selection. For bulk metadata **editing** across a selection, use the **Edit IPTC Info** dialog (see Chapter 19) which handles the "same value across all selected" vs. "different values" distinction explicitly.

When the panel says "ExifTool not found"

If the bundled ExifTool is unreachable (corrupt bundle, hand-deleted, etc.), the Metadata panel shows a single-line message pointing to the install location, and all read-dependent fields stay blank. Caption / Copyright writes also no-op silently.

The fix is to reinstall PhotoTaken (unzip the bundle over the existing folder) or, if you're running from source, to install ExifTool on PATH:

```
winget install --id OliverBetz.ExifTool -e
```

See Chapter 28 Troubleshooting for more.

18. Editing caption and copyright

The two most frequently-edited IPTC fields, **Caption** and **Copyright**, get dedicated editable inputs directly inside the Metadata panel so you don't have to open a dialog for common per-image annotation. This chapter covers what they write, how they write it, and when to prefer the full IPTC editor instead.

Caption

Caption is a multi-line text input under the camera/lens/exposure sections of the Metadata panel. It's the description of what's in the image, the same field Lightroom calls "Caption," Photo Mechanic calls "Caption," and press workflows call the "dateline" or "cutline" paragraph.

Editing:

- Click into the Caption field. Type.
- Paste supports multi-line text, newlines are preserved.
- There's no hard length limit; the field sizes itself to fit the Metadata panel's column.

Saving:

- Click the **Save Caption / Copyright** button below the two fields. The write runs on a background thread via ExifTool.
- The status bar shows a transient "Saving caption..." message, then "Saved." when complete.
- Nothing else in the UI is frozen during the save.

Copyright

Copyright is a single-line text input just below Caption. It's the rights statement on the image, typically © 2026 Your Name Photography or similar.

Same editing and saving behavior as Caption. Same Save button saves both fields at once.

What each field writes on disk

PhotoTaken mirrors **Caption** and **Copyright** to **three** standards each, so any downstream tool that reads one of them sees the update:

Caption lands in:

- `IPTC:Caption-Abstract` , the IPTC IIM standard.
- `EXIF:ImageDescription` , the EXIF standard.
- `XMP:Description` , the XMP standard (Adobe / ISO).

Copyright lands in:

- `IPTC:CopyrightNotice`
- `EXIF:Copyright`
- `XMP:Rights`

Mirroring to all three is non-optional. Different tools look at different fields, a library that reads only EXIF (older image viewers) might miss an XMP-only caption; Photo Mechanic prefers IPTC; modern tools increasingly prefer XMP. Writing all three makes the value portable across every tool your deliverables might touch.

For RAW files, writes land in the file's adjacent `.xmp` sidecar rather than the RAW container itself, same sidecar rule as color/rating tags (see Chapter 12).

ExifTool `-overwrite_original` mode

PhotoTaken invokes ExifTool with `-overwrite_original` , which means the write replaces the original file in place without leaving an ExifTool-style backup alongside it (the usual `imagename.jpg_original` that ExifTool creates by default).

Why: those `_original` files would be a nightmare for a working photographer, every edit would double the file count on disk, and your Windows Explorer view would fill with backup copies. We've made a deliberate choice to trust ExifTool's in-place rewrite, which is transactional (it writes to a temp file in the same directory and atomically renames on success).

If something does go wrong mid-write, power loss, disk-full, external tool holding the file open, ExifTool cleans up the temp file and your original is unchanged. No `_original` backup is generated in that case either.

When to use this vs. the full IPTC editor

The inline Caption and Copyright editor is convenient for quick per-image notes. Use it when:

- You're annotating one image at a time.
- You only need Caption and/or Copyright.
- The Metadata panel is already open for other reasons.

Use the full **Edit IPTC Info** dialog (Ctrl/Cmd+I, see Chapter 19) when:

- You need to edit other IPTC fields (creator contact info, credit, source, headline, keywords, location, etc.).
- You're bulk-editing a multi-image selection.
- You want the dialog's explicit "mixed values" handling.

Both tools write the same way and to the same places. Mixing the two on the same set of images is safe.

19. Full IPTC editor

The **Edit IPTC Info** dialog is PhotoTaken's deep metadata editor, every IPTC field you'd need to fill in for a professional delivery, in one modal form, with multi-file awareness built in. It's the tool for shot-specific or delivery-specific metadata: the wedding's actual headline, the city you really shot in, the specific usage instructions for a press release.

In the Light edition, only **Copyright** and **Caption** are editable here; the rest of the fields below are visible but greyed out. Pro unlocks the whole set.

Edit fields directly. Empty a field to clear it on the file.

Creator:	Riley Chen
Creator email:	
Creator phone:	
Creator website:	
Copyright:	(c) 2025 Riley Chen. Sample image, CC0 source.
Rights usage:	
Credit:	
Source:	
Headline:	
Caption:	Snow-covered alpine peaks under a clear winter sky
Instructions:	
Keywords:	mountains, snow, alpine, winter, landscape
City:	
Sublocation:	
State/Province:	
Country:	

Save

Cancel

The IPTC editor, with a photo's caption, credit, and keywords loaded.

Opening the dialog

Three equivalent ways, all requiring at least one image to be selected in the contact sheet:

- Click **Edit IPTC Info** on the toolbar.
- Right-click a thumbnail and pick **Edit IPTC Info**.

- Press **Ctrl/Cmd+I**.

The dialog opens over the main window as a modal.

First metadata read of the session. Before showing the dialog, PhotoTaken reads the current metadata from every selected file. A progress dialog appears immediately so the window doesn't freeze during the read. If this is the first time you've pressed Ctrl/Cmd+I since launching the app, the progress dialog includes a notice explaining that ExifTool may take 20-30 seconds to start up on the first call of the session. Subsequent reads are near-instant because PhotoTaken pre-warms the ExifTool process in the background at startup and keeps it running for the entire session. The warm-up notice disappears after the first read completes.

Fields

The dialog exposes the full IPTC IIM field set that matters for professional delivery, organized into logical groups:

Creator and contact

- **Creator**, the photographer's name (IPTC `By-line`).
- **Creator email**
- **Creator phone**
- **Creator website**

Rights

- **Copyright**, the rights statement (mirrored to EXIF + XMP, same as the inline editor in Chapter 18).
- **Rights usage**, explicit usage terms, if your delivery agreement requires them.

Attribution

- **Credit**, how the image should be credited when published.
- **Source**, the original source (agency, archive, publication).

Descriptive

- **Headline**, a short title (e.g. "Brown-Sanders Wedding, First Dance").
- **Caption**, the full descriptive paragraph (multi-line).
- **Instructions**, editorial or delivery instructions.
- **Keywords**, comma- or semicolon-separated. PhotoTaken normalizes the separator and trims whitespace; duplicates (case-insensitive) are de-duped.

Location

- **City**
- **Sublocation**, neighborhood, venue, etc.
- **State / Province**
- **Country**

Every field above is written to its standard IPTC IIM tag. Caption and Copyright are additionally mirrored to EXIF and XMP like the inline editor does.

Single-file editing

When you open the dialog with **one** image selected:

- Every field pre-populates with that image's current value.
- Type to overwrite. Leave blank to clear the field.
- Click **OK** to write. Click **Cancel** to discard changes.

This is the common "I shot this one specific image and want to annotate it" case.

Multi-file editing

When you open the dialog with **multiple** images selected, each field loads with one of two things:

- **A single common value**, if every selected image agrees. You're editing the shared value for all of them.
- **A muted `<multiple values>` placeholder**, if the selected images don't agree. This tells you "these files disagree; PhotoTaken isn't going to guess what to collapse them to."

The Keywords field uses the same placeholder but implements it as true hint text (not actual field content), so if you type a new keyword list it replaces the placeholder cleanly, the `<multiple values>` string never sneaks in as a literal keyword.

The save-only-what-you-touched rule

The most important invariant in the editor: **only fields you explicitly edit get written.**

Untouched fields are skipped entirely, PhotoTaken does not read-back-and-write-same-value.

This matters most during multi-select:

- A field showing `<multiple values>` that you leave alone: PhotoTaken preserves each file's existing distinct value. The save passes over it silently.
- A field showing `<multiple values>` that you type into: every selected file gets overwritten with your new value.
- A field showing a single common value that you edit: every selected file gets overwritten with your new value.
- A field showing a single common value that you leave alone: every selected file keeps its existing value. Not re-written.

So a common pattern is: select 50 images, type a new Headline once, click OK. Every image now has that headline. All other fields, creator, copyright, keywords, city, stay untouched, each at whatever it was before.

Explicit clear

To explicitly empty a field across a selection:

- Edit the field and delete its content so it's blank.
- Click OK.

PhotoTaken writes an empty value to that field on every selected file, clearing it. This is different from "leave it alone", both clear-to-empty and leave-alone look like an empty field in the dialog when the selection all had the field empty to begin with, but mid-edit behavior reveals the distinction:

- If you didn't touch the field, it's marked untouched and skipped.
- If you touched it (clicked in, deleted content, clicked out), it's marked dirty and written.

In practice you rarely need explicit clear; most users reach for it only when removing a field that a previous Stationery Pad put there.

Save and progress

Click **OK** to start the save. PhotoTaken closes the IPTC editor and opens a **Saving IPTC Info...** progress dialog that blocks the rest of the window until every file is written.

Writes happen one file at a time, each image gets its own exiftool invocation. The progress bar shows `N of M` and the label names the current file, so you can see exactly how far along the save is. Writing per-file rather than in one big batch means a silent per-file failure (the original scheduled-one-big-exiftool-call approach could hide a single-file failure inside a successful overall return code) is impossible: every file either writes successfully or lands in the failed list.

Blocking the UI during the save is deliberate. If you could start a keyword search halfway through a big IPTC write, the files that hadn't been written yet would miss that keyword in the results. Holding the user behind the progress dialog until everything has been written keeps the search index and the on-disk state honest.

Cancel is available throughout. Canceling stops the loop after the current file finishes, files already written keep their new values; any remaining files are reported as failed so you can decide what to do with them.

When the save completes, the status bar reports:

```
Saved IPTC changes to 47 file(s).
```

If exiftool couldn't save one or more files (typical culprits: the file is open in Lightroom, an Explorer preview is holding it, a virus scanner is mid-scan), a **Some files didn't save** dialog appears listing the affected files (up to ten by name, then `... and N more`) with the likely causes and an inline **Retry** button. Close whatever might be holding the file, click Retry, and PhotoTaken re-runs the save for exactly those files behind the same modal progress dialog. You can retry as many times as needed.

Note on read-only files. Files with the Windows read-only attribute set are automatically unlocked before PhotoTaken writes metadata, matching Photo Mechanic, Lightroom, and Bridge behavior. This covers the common case where a file arrives with the flag set from an SD card, a macOS-mounted card reader, or certain camera bodies. The flag stays cleared afterwards so subsequent edits don't trip over the same issue. PhotoTaken's ingest path also strips the flag from every copied file at ingest time, so freshly-imported shoots arrive clean.

Cancel

Click **Cancel** to close the dialog without writing. Every edit made in the dialog is discarded; no file is touched.

The Keywords box suggests as you type

Start typing in **Keywords** and PhotoTaken offers words you have used before. Two sources feed the list, in this order:

1. Every word in your keyword tree (chapter 5a), so your own branch names come first.
2. Every keyword already on photos PhotoTaken has indexed.

The second is what makes this useful before you have built a tree, and on a library someone else keyworded. Words differing only in capitals are folded together, and the spelling offered is one your own files use.

Suggestions match anywhere in a word rather than only at the start, so typing `owl` offers both `Barn Owl` and `Snowy Owl`, the same way keyword search behaves. The box holds a comma-separated list, and the suggestion applies to the word you are typing now: the keywords before it are left alone.

Only folders you have opened are indexed, so the list grows as you browse. The same suggestions appear in the Stationery Pad editor's Keywords box.

When to use the editor vs. a Stationery Pad

The editor is for **one-off** or **per-shoot** values, fields that vary from shoot to shoot:

- The specific headline of this wedding.
- The city you shot in today.
- The keywords for this particular set.

Use a **Stationery Pad** (see Chapter 20) for fields that repeat across every shoot, creator, copyright, credit, usage rights. Apply the pad first (on ingest or as a batch), then open the IPTC editor on your delivery selects to add the shoot-specific fields on top.

The two cooperate: pads lay the baseline, the editor handles the overrides.

19a. Edit EXIF Info ◆

The **Edit EXIF Info...** dialog edits the capture-level EXIF fields that are most useful to correct when you are combining images from the same shoot or correcting camera-body mistakes: date/time, lens model, and GPS coordinates.

Open it from the toolbar (keyboard shortcut **Ctrl/Cmd+E**), from the thumbnail right-click context menu (**Edit EXIF Info...**), or by pressing **Ctrl/Cmd+E** with focus anywhere in the grid. The action is enabled whenever at least one thumbnail is selected.

Edit fields directly. Empty a field to clear it on the file.

Date/Time Taken: 2025/09/14 09:00:00
Format: YYYY/MM/DD HH:MM:SS (colons in the date part are also accepted)

Lens: RF24-70mm F2.8 L IS USM

GPS Latitude: e.g. 40.71280 or -40.71280

GPS Longitude: e.g. -74.00600 or 139.69170
Decimal degrees. Positive = North / East, negative = South / West.

Save Cancel

The EXIF editor, with a photo's date/time and lens loaded.

When to use it

The canonical use case is multiple camera bodies on the same shoot: one body had the wrong clock, or a wide-angle prime with no electronic contacts was attached and the lens name is blank. Select all images from the affected body and use Edit EXIF Info to correct them in one pass.

Other common situations:

- Scans or phone photos that need the original shoot date stamped in.
- A manual or adapted lens that the body didn't identify automatically.
- Adding or correcting GPS coordinates on a location shoot.

Fields

Field	Tags written	Notes
Date/Time Taken	EXIF:DateTimeOriginal , EXIF:CreateDate	Format: YYYY/MM/DD HH:MM:SS . Colons in the date part are also accepted.
Lens	EXIF:LensModel	Free text; leave blank to clear the field.
GPS Latitude	EXIF:GPSLatitude , EXIF:GPSLatitudeRef	Decimal degrees. Positive = North, negative = South. Accepts trailing N / S letter.
GPS Longitude	EXIF:GPSLongitude , EXIF:GPSLongitudeRef	Decimal degrees. Positive = East, negative = West. Accepts trailing E / W letter.

GPS coordinate examples:

You type	Meaning
40.71280	40.71280° N
-40.71280	40.71280° S
40.71280 N	40.71280° N
40.71280 S	40.71280° S
-74.00600	74.00600° W
139.69170 E	139.69170° E

Multi-file editing

Multi-file editing follows the same rules as the IPTC editor (Chapter 19):

- Fields where all selected files agree show the common value.
- Fields where files disagree show a muted `<multiple values>` placeholder.
- Leave a placeholder untouched to preserve every file's own value.
- Type over a placeholder to set every file to the same new value.
- Leave any field completely blank (erase all characters) to clear that tag on every selected file.

Validation

The dialog validates values before saving:

- An unrecognisable date string triggers an inline error and prevents Save.
- A GPS latitude outside -90 to $+90$, or a longitude outside -180 to $+180$, also triggers an error.

Fix the highlighted field and click Save again.

Save mechanics

The dialog reads field values from the files on a background thread (with an indeterminate loading dialog visible) so the UI stays responsive. On Save, writes happen one file at a time on a background thread behind a determinate **Saving EXIF Info...** progress dialog. Cancel is supported between files. If one or more files fail (file is locked by another application, or the file is marked read-only), a **Some files didn't save** dialog lists the affected files with an inline **Retry** button.

After saving, the Metadata panel refreshes automatically to show the new values.

Difference from the IPTC editor

Both editors use the same multi-file MIXED-value pattern and the same per-file write-one-at-a-time model. The distinction is in the *kind* of metadata:

- **Edit IPTC Info (Ctrl/Cmd+I)**, editorial / delivery metadata: creator, copyright, caption, keywords, location names (city, country), rights usage.
 - **Edit EXIF Info (Ctrl/Cmd+E)**, capture metadata: when it was shot, what lens was on the camera, where the camera was.
-

20. Stationery Pads ◆

A **Stationery Pad** is a named, reusable set of IPTC metadata fields. You create one for each typical pattern of shoot (one for weddings, one for editorial, one for corporate headshots, etc.) and then stamp the pad onto an entire selection or every file in an ingest with a single click. No more retyping the same creator and copyright on every shoot.

The name comes from the analog-printing-age concept of "stationery", pre-printed letterhead you layer onto every outgoing document.

Fill in the fields you want this pad to stamp onto photos. Empty fields are left alone — they don't overwrite existing metadata, so you can layer pads.

Pad name:	Wedding Default
Creator:	Lorri Freedman
Creator email:	lorri@example.com
Creator phone:	
Creator website:	phototakensoftware.com
Copyright:	(c) 2026 Lorri Freedman Photography
Rights usage:	
Credit:	Lorri Freedman Photography
Source:	
Headline:	Spring wedding season
Caption:	Details from a spring wedding shoot.
Instructions:	
Keywords:	wedding, portrait, Boston
City:	Boston
Sublocation:	
State/Province:	MA
Country:	USA

OK Cancel

The Stationery Pad editor, with a sample pad's fields filled in.

When to use a pad

Pads are the right tool for fields that **repeat across every shoot of a given pattern**:

- Creator name, email, phone, website.
- Copyright notice.
- Rights usage terms.
- Credit line.
- Standard keywords that apply to an entire shoot type (e.g. wedding, ceremony, portrait).

They are **not** the right tool for shoot-specific values (headline, caption, city) that vary from one session to the next. Use the **Edit IPTC Info** dialog (Chapter 19) for those on top of the pad's baseline.

The pad manager

Click **Manage Stationery Pads...** on the toolbar to open the pad manager dialog. It has a list of your existing pads on the left and five action buttons:

- **New...**, create a pad. You get a name prompt followed by a field editor showing every IPTC field the pad can set. Fill in the ones you want the pad to stamp, leave the rest blank.
- **Edit...**, open the selected pad for changes. The name is editable here too.
- **Duplicate**, copy the selected pad under a new name. Useful for variants ("Wedding, Venue A", "Wedding, Venue B").
- **Remove**, delete the selected pad. Confirmation dialog guards the action.
- **Close**, dismiss the manager.

Fields a pad can set

Every IPTC field exposed by the full IPTC editor is also settable on a pad, the two dialogs share their field list by design. That includes:

Creator and contact: Creator, Creator email, Creator phone, Creator website.

Rights: Copyright, Rights usage.

Attribution: Credit, Source.

Descriptive: Headline, Caption, Instructions, Keywords.

Location: City, Sublocation, State/Province, Country.

The empty-fields-don't-overwrite rule

This is the key invariant that makes pads safe to layer. **Only fields you fill in on the pad are written to the target file.** Any field you leave blank on the pad is **skipped on apply**, the target file's existing value is left alone.

So you can:

1. Apply a **"Default, Creator + Copyright"** pad to every shoot during ingest. That stamps creator info and copyright onto every file, touching nothing else.
2. Later, for a specific shoot, apply a **"Wedding, Brown-Sanders"** pad with just Headline + City + Caption filled in. The wedding pad stamps those three fields without clobbering the creator and copyright from the first pad.
3. If needed, open the IPTC editor on your delivery picks to add per-image overrides.

Each layer contributes only the fields it cared about. Nothing is accidentally erased.

Keywords are additive

Keywords are the one field where pads **append** rather than **overwrite**. Each pad's keyword list is added to whatever the file already has, with duplicates (case-insensitive) dropped.

That means applying "Default, wedding, portrait" followed by "Wedding, Brown-Sanders, ceremony" yields a final file with keywords `wedding, portrait, Brown-Sanders, ceremony`, not the second pad's list alone. This matches the typical photographer's intent: keywords are a tag cloud that grows as you add context.

Applying a pad to a selection

Two paths:

- Toolbar: select one or more thumbnails, click **Apply Stationery Pad...**
- Right-click menu: right-click any thumbnail, pick **Apply Stationery Pad...** (applies to the whole selection, or just the right-clicked tile if it's not in the selection).

Either opens a small dialog with a dropdown of your pads. Pick one, click **Apply**. The dialog closes and PhotoTaken writes the pad's fields onto every selected file on a background thread.

The status bar shows transient progress ("Applying pad to 47 file(s)..." → "Applied pad to 47 file(s).") and a failure dialog surfaces any files that couldn't be stamped, exactly like the IPTC editor's save.

Applying during ingest

The **Ingest** dialog (Chapter 11) has an **Apply Stationery Pad** dropdown. Pick one there and every file in the ingest gets the pad stamped as it lands on disk, the primary destination copy **and** the backup destination copy, in lockstep. No second step needed.

The selected pad is remembered between ingests.

This is the best place to apply your "Default, Creator + Copyright" pad, so the shoot's baseline metadata is present from the moment the files exist locally. You can still apply additional pads or IPTC edits after the ingest finishes.

Where pads are stored

Pads live in your PhotoTaken `settings.json` file under `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\` (see Appendix B). That means:

- They survive app updates.
- They travel with your user profile if you sign in on another Windows machine (if your profile is a roaming profile).
- You can copy `settings.json` between machines to transfer your pads.

There's no export/import UI yet; copy the file manually if you need to share pads with another PhotoTaken install.

Pad vs. IPTC editor, quick decision

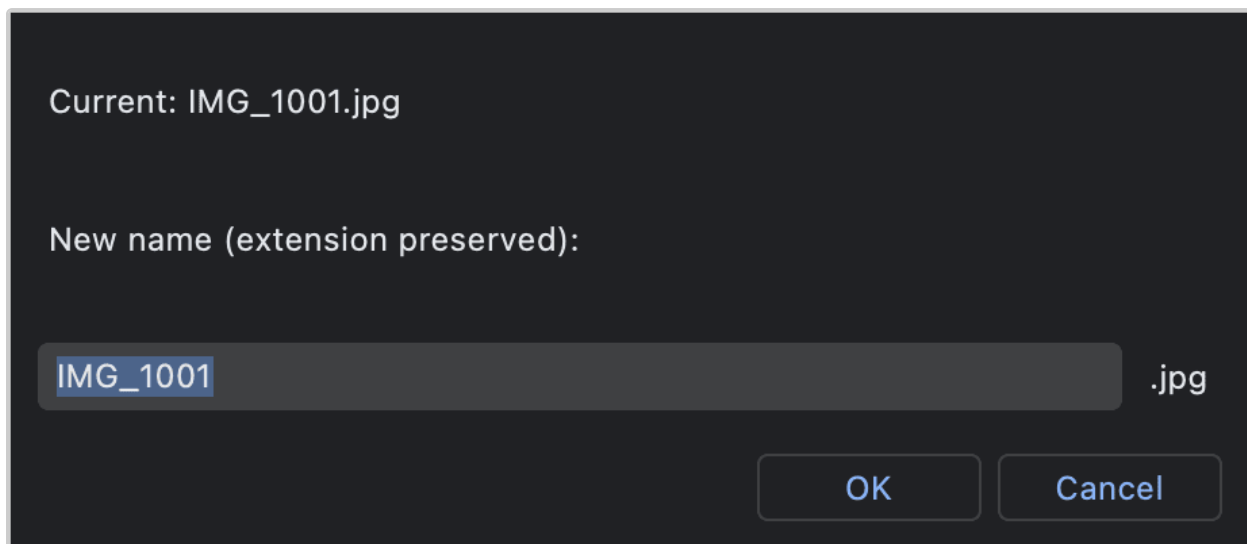
Situation	Use
Every-shoot boilerplate (creator, copyright, credit)	Stationery Pad , applied during ingest.
Variation within a shoot type (venue A vs. venue B)	Stationery Pad for each variant.
One-off caption on a single delivery pick	Edit IPTC Info dialog.
Per-shoot headline and city, applied to all delivery picks	Edit IPTC Info on the selected picks.
Keyword list that represents the shoot's theme	Pad, applied once at ingest.
Keyword list for a specific subset of delivery picks	Edit IPTC Info on that subset.

The pattern: pads lay down the repeating baseline, IPTC editor adds the one-off specifics. You rarely need anything else.

Part VI, File operations

21. Renaming

PhotoTaken offers three rename paths: a simple **Rename** dialog for one file at a time, a **Batch Rename** dialog with template tokens for renaming many files at once, and a **Rename Folder** action in the Favorite Folders panel for directories. All three respect RAW+JPEG pairing and multi-RAW tiles so you never end up with a JPG that has drifted away from its RAW sibling.



The single-file rename dialog, extension preserved.

Single-file rename

Right-click a thumbnail and choose **Rename...**, or select one tile and hit the Rename menu entry. A small dialog opens pre-filled with the current filename.

What you can change:

- **The stem.** Type any valid filename. Extension handling is covered below.
- **Letter case.** `IMG_0001.JPG` → `Img_0001.JPG` is a valid rename on NTFS (which is case-preserving but case-insensitive for lookups).

Validation catches:

- **Invalid characters,** `\ / : * ? " < > |` are rejected with a warning; the dialog stays open so you can edit.

- **Empty name**, rejected.
- **Collision**, if a file with the target name already exists in the same folder, the rename is refused with a message.

If you don't include an extension in your new name, the existing extension is preserved automatically. That means `Img_0001` renames to `Img_0001.JPG`, the extension you want to keep 99% of the time. If you do include an explicit extension, PhotoTaken takes you at your word and uses it, but note that changing the **extension** rarely makes sense for image files and PhotoTaken won't stop you from doing something that would untie the file from its RAW sibling.

RAW+JPEG pair lockstep

Renaming a tile renames **every file on the tile**, JPG + RAW, JPG + NEF + DNG, any combination. Each sibling's extension is preserved; only the stem changes:

```
IMG_0001.JPG → Bride_Portrait_01.JPG
IMG_0001.NEF → Bride_Portrait_01.NEF
IMG_0001.DNG → Bride_Portrait_01.DNG
IMG_0001.NEF.xmp → Bride_Portrait_01.NEF.xmp (sidecar follows the RAW)
```

If any one of these renames fails mid-operation (the OS refuses a specific file for any reason), PhotoTaken rolls **every** completed rename back so the tile stays internally consistent. You don't end up with a half-renamed pair.

The `_shootdesk_tags.json` cache row for the old name is migrated to the new name so the tile keeps its rating and color without a rescan.

The renamed tile re-sorts into place

A filename change can change where a tile belongs in the grid. When the contact sheet is sorted by **Name** or **Type** (the two sort orders derived from the filename), PhotoTaken re-sorts the grid as soon as you confirm the rename, so the tile lands in its correct position instead of staying stranded where it was. Rename a shot at the bottom of the grid to a name starting with "A" and it moves to the top immediately. The renamed tile remains the selected item and is scrolled into view, so you never lose track of it. Sorting by Date, Size, or Rating is unaffected by a name change, so under those orders the tile keeps its place and the grid is left untouched.

Batch rename with templates ◆

To rename many tiles at once, select two or more thumbnails, right-click, and pick **Batch Rename...** A dialog opens with a template-string input at the top and a live preview table showing the current name and proposed new name for every selected tile.

Type a template using tokens to rename every selected file. The preview updates as you type. Extensions are preserved automatically; omit {ext} from the template. Double-click a row in the preview to hand-edit one name.

Start with: Keep original name

Click to add: Your name/subject Date YYYYMMDD Date YYYY-MM-DD Sequence # Original name

Time: Time HH-MM-SS Time HHMMSS Time HH-MM

Camera info: Camera Lens ISO Aperture Shutter Focal length

{stem}

☐ Adjustments

Preview

Current name	New name
IMG_1001.jpg	IMG_1001.jpg
IMG_1002.jpg	IMG_1002.jpg
IMG_1003.jpg	IMG_1003.jpg
IMG_1004.jpg	IMG_1004.jpg
IMG_1005.jpg	IMG_1005.jpg

Rename Cancel

The batch rename dialog, with a template-driven preview table.

Type a template. The preview updates as you type. Click **Rename** to apply.

You don't need to learn the codes. Two helpers sit above the template box. The **Start with** dropdown offers ready-made recipes (*Subject + Date + Number*, *Date + Number*, *Date + Time + Number*, *Subject + Number*, *Date (with dashes) + Subject + Number*, and *Keep original name*); choosing one fills the box and the preview updates at once. Recipes with a subject insert the literal word `ShootName` as a placeholder, type over it with your shoot or place name. Under the dropdown is a row of plain-language **quick-add buttons** (*Your name/subject*, *Date YYYYMMDD*, *Date YYYY-MM-DD*, *Sequence #*, *Original name*, a *Time* row with *Time HH-MM-SS*, *Time HHMMSS*, and *Time HH-MM*, plus a *Camera info* row with *Camera*, *Lens*, *ISO*, *Aperture*, *Shutter*, and *Focal length*). Clicking a button inserts that piece into the template at the cursor. The presets include a **Date + Time + Number** recipe (`{date:yyyymmdd}{time:HHMMSS}{seq:4}`) that produces guaranteed-unique names like `20260624 173205 0001` . The template box itself stays fully editable for anyone who prefers typing tokens directly; the dropdown switches to *Custom...* the moment the text stops matching a recipe.

The dialog opens as soon as you choose **Batch Rename...**, with the current filenames already listed. On a large selection it reads each photo's shooting information (the data the date and EXIF tokens draw on) on a background thread, showing a **Reading photo metadata** progress bar while it works; the template box becomes active the moment that finishes. You can close the dialog at any point, including while the progress bar is still running.

Template tokens

The same tokens work in the batch rename dialog and in the Ingest dialog's Subfolder field.

Token	Expands to
<code>{stem}</code>	Original filename without extension
<code>{ext}</code>	Original extension, lowercase, without the dot
<code>{filename}</code>	Full original filename
<code>{seq}</code>	Sequence number (1, 2, 3, ...) in selection order
<code>{seq:N}</code>	Sequence zero-padded to N digits (<code>{seq:4}</code> → 0001, 0002, ...)
<code>{date}</code>	Capture date, <code>yyyy-mm-dd</code>
<code>{date:yyyymmdd}</code>	Capture date, compact (e.g. 20260414)
<code>{date:yyyy_mm_dd_HH-MM}</code>	Any combination of <code>yyyy</code> , <code>mm</code> , <code>dd</code> , <code>HH</code> , <code>MM</code> , <code>SS</code>
<code>{time}</code>	Capture time, <code>HH-MM-SS</code> (<code>17-32-05</code>)
<code>{time:HHMMSS}</code>	Capture time, compact (<code>173205</code>); or any mix of <code>HH</code> , <code>MM</code> , <code>SS</code>
<code>{yyyy}</code> , <code>{mm}</code> , <code>{dd}</code>	Individual date parts
<code>{exif:iso}</code>	ISO value
<code>{exif:camera}</code>	Camera model
<code>{exif:lens}</code>	Lens model
<code>{exif:aperture}</code>	Aperture (f-number)
<code>{exif:shutter}</code>	Shutter speed
<code>{exif:focal}</code>	Focal length in mm

Capture date comes from EXIF `DateTimeOriginal` ; if a file has no EXIF date, PhotoTaken falls back to the file's modification time. Illegal filename characters (\ / : * ? " < > |) are stripped from rendered output automatically, so `{exif:camera}` is safe even if your camera model contains a colon (which some do, X:T5).

Example templates

- `{date:yyyymmdd}_{seq:4}` → 20260414_0001 , 20260414_0002 , 20260414_0003 , ...
- `{stem}_pick` → IMG_0001_pick , IMG_0002_pick , ...
- `{exif:camera}-{seq}` → X-T5-1 , X-T5-2 , ...
- `{date:yyyy-mm-dd}_BrownSanders_{seq:3}` → 2026-04-14_BrownSanders_001 , ...
- `{date:yyyymmdd}_{time:HHMMSS}_{seq:4}` → 20260414_173205_0001 , ... (date, time, and number for guaranteed-unique names; the **Date + Time + Number** preset builds the same pieces separated by spaces)

Batch rename adjustments

A template builds a name from tokens, which is ideal for the start and end of a name: a prefix, a suffix, a date, or a sequence number wrapped around `{stem}` . It cannot reach *inside* the name, though. The **Adjustments** panel below the template field fills that gap, modelled on the batch-rename tools in file managers like Path Finder.

The panel starts collapsed, so a plain template-only rename looks exactly as it always has. Tick the **Adjustments** heading to expand it. Inside are six independent adjustments; tick the box on a row to arm it. Armed adjustments run on each rendered name from the top row down, before the name is made filename-safe:

1. **Insert** drops a piece of text in at a character position. "Insert `_` at position 4" turns `IMG0001` into `IMG_0001` , because position 4 is where the first `0` sits. Counting from the end instead, position 1 is the very end of the name, so an Insert at position 1 from the end appends the text.
2. **Remove** deletes a run of characters. "Remove 4 characters at position 1" strips the `IMG_` prefix off `IMG_0001` , leaving `0001` .
3. **Replace** overwrites a run of characters with new text. "Replace 3 characters at position 1 with `PIC` " turns `IMG_0001` into `PIC_0001` . To overwrite everything from a position to the end of the name, set the count high; it clamps to the end.
4. **Find** swaps one piece of text for another wherever it appears, for example find `IMG` and replace with `Wedding` . Untick **match all** to change only the first occurrence.

5. **Change case** recases the whole name: UPPERCASE, lowercase, Title Case, or Sentence case.
6. **Clean up spacing** collapses runs of whitespace and trims the ends, and can turn spaces into underscores or dashes, remove them, or leave them.

Every position is measured in characters counting from 1. For Remove and Replace, the run of characters extends inward from the anchored edge: counting from the start, position 1 is the first character and the run runs to the right; counting from the end, position 1 is the last character and the run runs to the left, so "Remove 3 characters at position 1 from the end" drops the last three. Insert places text between characters: position 1 from the start is before the first character, and position 1 from the end is after the last character, so it appends. Positions past either edge clamp to that edge instead of failing, so the live preview never breaks while you are mid-type. The extension is never part of the name the adjustments see; it is preserved and reattached afterward, exactly as with a template.

Because adjustments run before the filename-safety pass, a Find-and-replace that introduces an illegal character (say, replacing `_` with `:`) is still cleaned up: the illegal character is stripped from the final name.

Hand-editing one name in the preview

Sometimes one file in the batch does not fit the pattern. Double-click its row in the preview's **New name** column and type the name you want. A hand-edited row is shown in **bold** and is pinned: it keeps your typed name even if you go on to change the template or an adjustment, so you can fix the outlier first and then tune the template for the rest. If you leave the extension off your typed name, the file's original extension is added back, the same as the single-file Rename dialog. To release a row back to the generated name, clear its cell.

Two-pass temp-name rename

Batch rename applies in two passes to avoid mid-operation collisions. Consider a template that shifts every filename by one, `{stem}` for `IMG_0001`, `IMG_0002`, `IMG_0003` renamed with `IMG_{seq+1:4}` (conceptually):

```
IMG_0001 → IMG_0002
IMG_0002 → IMG_0003
IMG_0003 → IMG_0004
```

A naive rename would fail on the second rename because `IMG_0003` is still there after the first rename succeeded. PhotoTaken avoids this by:

1. **Pass 1:** rename every file to a unique temporary name (`IMG_0001` → `.phototaken-rename-abc123xyz` , etc.). No collisions because temp names are UUIDs.
2. **Pass 2:** rename each temporary name to its intended final name.

If any pass-1 rename fails, every file already moved to a temp name is put back under its original name and you see a dialog saying nothing was renamed. A pass-2 failure (vanishingly rare at this point, since the hard collision work is done) returns just that file to its original name and lists it in a warning dialog. In the rare case where even the restore fails, that file's temporary path is named in the dialog and written to the log, so nothing is ever left renamed to an anonymous `.phototaken-rename-...` name with no way back.

Undoing a rename

Press **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** after a rename and every file goes back to the name it had. This covers both single-file rename and batch rename, at any size.

Undo replays the recorded old/new pairs in reverse through the same two-pass algorithm described above, on the same background worker, so it inherits the same collision safety: undoing a rotation is itself a rotation, and undoing 500 files does not block the window. Because the pairs recorded are the moves that actually landed (not the moves that were planned), a file that failed to rename is never offered for undo.

Three things move back together:

- the primary file, its RAW siblings, and any `.xmp` sidecar
- the entry in `_shootdesk_tags.json` , which is keyed by bare filename, so colors and star ratings follow the files rather than being stranded on the old key
- the pixmap cache and folder snapshot entries, so the grid repaints against the restored names

If the world changed in between, undo restores everything it safely can and reports the rest. A file that has since been deleted is skipped as "the renamed file is no longer there"; a name that something else has taken is skipped as "a file with that name already exists". A clean undo just says so on the status bar; a partial one opens a dialog naming each skipped file.

The undo timeline is shared with delete and color/rating undo and is capped at roughly 50 entries, so repeated presses step back through recent actions in the order they happened. It is held in memory only and does not survive quitting PhotoTaken.

Rename keeps the search index in step, in both directions: the file's indexed row, its keywords, and its full-text entry all move to the new path, so a renamed photo is findable under its new name immediately rather than after the next folder open. The database write runs on a worker, since rewriting a row per file under the index write-lock would freeze the window on a large batch.

A colour or rating write that was still queued when the rename happened is redirected to follow the file. Those writes run on a background thread, so one set moments before a rename used to fire at the old path: for a JPEG that lost the tag outright, and for a RAW it created a sidecar under the old stem, leaving the tag on an orphan file while the renamed RAW had none. The rename now holds the tag writer off while it works and discovers sidecars inside that same window, so either the write finishes first and its sidecar is moved with everything else, or it is redirected to the new name.

Rename the rest of the tile's siblings

Each tile's RAW siblings rename in lockstep, same as the single-file case: the template applies once to the tile and every sibling picks up the resolved stem with its own extension preserved. Any `.xmp` sidecar (e.g. `IMG_0001.NEF.xmp`) found next to the primary or a RAW sibling is renamed to match in the same two-pass scheme, so ratings and labels stored in XMP stay attached.

Folder rename

To rename a folder, right-click it in the Favorite Folders panel and pick **Rename Folder....** Same validation as file rename. Additionally:

- If the folder is currently open in a tab, the tab's label updates automatically.
- If any subfolder of the renamed folder is open in another tab, that tab's path is rewritten to the new parent so the tab doesn't break.
- `_shootdesk_tags.json` and any `.xmp` sidecars inside the folder travel with it, they're just files inside the folder that gets renamed.

Folder rename is disabled on favorite roots. You can't rename `D:\` via the right-click menu, do that in Windows if you actually need to.

22. Rotating

PhotoTaken's rotate actions are **lossless**, they update the EXIF Orientation tag in the file's metadata rather than re-encoding the image bitmap. No quality loss, no double-compression, and the rotation is reversible by rotating the other direction. This matches what Lightroom, Photo Mechanic, and Windows Photos all do for orientation changes.

How to rotate

Select one or more thumbnails, right-click, and pick:

- **Rotate Left**, 90° counter-clockwise.
- **Rotate Right**, 90° clockwise.
- **Flip (180°)**, a half turn (the same result as rotating twice in either direction), for the common case of an upside-down frame.

Each menu entry shows the selection count in parentheses when more than one tile is selected: **Rotate Right (47)**, **Flip (180°) (47)**, etc. No keyboard shortcut, rotations are rare enough during a cull that one wasn't worth reserving a key.

The thumbnail updates immediately in the grid, and the full-size Viewer (if open on the rotated image) also updates.

What actually changes on disk

The rotate action writes a new value to the file's EXIF Orientation tag, an integer 1 through 8 that describes how the image should be displayed relative to how the pixels are stored. PhotoTaken doesn't touch the pixel data.

Every modern image viewer, browser, and editor respects EXIF Orientation. The same file rotated in PhotoTaken will display the new orientation in Windows Photos, Chrome, Lightroom, Photoshop, an iPhone viewing the JPEG, etc.

Composing rotations

Because the Orientation tag is a single integer, repeated rotations compose correctly. Rotate Right twice on a portrait image and you get a 180° flip. Rotate Right four times and you're back where you started, no cumulative artifacts because no pixel re-encode happened.

This is different from re-encoding: a rotation that re-encodes a JPEG loses quality each time (JPEG is a lossy format, every save rounds some detail), so a rotation chain degrades the image. PhotoTaken's approach avoids that entirely.

Which formats support lossless rotation

All of the formats PhotoTaken recognizes support lossless rotation via EXIF Orientation:

- **JPEG**, standard EXIF Orientation.
- **TIFF**, same tag.
- **PNG**, PNG doesn't have an EXIF segment of its own but supports the same rotation concept via its own metadata; PhotoTaken handles it transparently.
- **Every supported RAW**, in all 26 formats. The orientation tag on a RAW's sidecar or within the RAW's EXIF block is updated.

You'll never see a "can't rotate this format" error from PhotoTaken on a file it recognizes.

Multi-select

Rotate Left / Rotate Right / Flip on a multi-select applies the same turn to every selected tile. Pairs and multi-RAW tiles rotate as a unit, the JPEG and every sibling get the same new orientation value.

Rotating inside the Viewer

Rotate is a contact-sheet action, not a Viewer action. If you're in the Viewer and notice an image needs rotation, press **Esc** to return to the grid, then rotate from there. This is a deliberate scope decision, the Viewer is strictly for tagging and navigation, not for modification.

Rotating video clips

Rotate Left / Rotate Right work on video clips too, and they're the fix for a common and confusing problem: a clip shot with the camera held vertically that imports lying on its side.

Phones write a rotation flag into vertical videos, so they come in upright automatically. Many cameras don't. Nikon DSLRs in particular (the **D5** among them) record a vertically-held clip as a plain sideways 1920×1080 (or 4K) landscape file with **no orientation flag at all**, the camera simply doesn't save which way it was held. A level clip and a rotated clip from the same body are byte-identical in their orientation metadata (both read as "0°"), so there is nothing for PhotoTaken, or any other player, to auto-detect from. The information was never recorded.

Selecting the clip and choosing **Rotate Right**, **Rotate Left**, or **Flip (180°)** supplies that missing information. For video, PhotoTaken writes a standard rotation flag (the QuickTime display matrix) into the clip's metadata rather than the EXIF Orientation tag used for stills. Three consequences:

- **It's lossless.** The video stream is not re-encoded; only the small rotation flag changes, so there's zero quality loss. Repeated rotations compose the same way still rotations do (Rotate Right twice = 180°, four times = back to start; Flip is a one-step 180°).
- **It rewrites the file to protect the original, so large clips take a moment.** ExifTool changes the flag by building a fresh copy of the file and swapping it in, never editing the bytes in place; that rebuild-and-replace is what guarantees a crash or error can't leave you with a half-written, corrupted original. The cost is that the whole file is copied, so a multi-gigabyte clip on a slow external or network drive can take from a few seconds to a couple of minutes (it's the disk copy, not the rotation, that takes the time). The rotation runs in the background with a "**Rotating...**" indicator (which notes that video files are copied when rotating to avoid data loss), the app stays responsive, and the write timeout scales with file size so a legitimately slow copy isn't cut off. A quick still rotation shows no indicator at all.
- **It fixes the clip everywhere, not just here.** Because the QuickTime display matrix is the standard rotation flag, the clip then plays the right way up in Windows, VLC, QuickTime, Premiere, and anywhere else, not only in PhotoTaken's contact sheet. You're correcting the file, not painting over it.

A mixed selection of photos and clips is handled in one step: the stills get the EXIF Orientation update, the clips get the display-matrix update, all in the chosen direction.

What rotation does NOT do

- It doesn't crop. There's no crop tool in PhotoTaken; that's your RAW developer's job.
- It doesn't straighten by an arbitrary angle. Only 90° steps. Fine straightening is also a RAW developer's job.
- It doesn't create a new file or a derivative. The original file's metadata is updated in place.

23. Deleting and undo

Deleting in PhotoTaken sends files to the Windows Recycle Bin (or macOS Trash) when they're on a local drive, and **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** restores the most recent batch instantly, even if you deleted 500 files at once. Network drives are a special case, and they behave **differently on Windows vs. Mac**, Windows treats them as permanent deletes, macOS routes them to a hidden per-volume Trash on the share itself. Both are covered in detail below.

Ctrl/Cmd+Z is one shared undo history, not a delete-only shortcut. It also undoes the most recent color tag or star rating change (see Chapter 12). Delete undo and tag undo sit on the same timeline, in reverse chronological order, so pressing Ctrl/Cmd+Z always reverts whichever action, of either kind, happened most recently, and works the same way in the contact sheet and the Viewer.

Deleting

Select one or more thumbnails and either:

- Press **Delete**, or
- Right-click and pick **Delete** (the menu entry shows the selection count when more than one tile is selected).

A confirmation dialog opens listing what will be deleted. Click **Yes** to delete, **No** to abort. Deletion is all-or-nothing, you can't selectively confirm individual files mid-batch.

For a paired or multi-RAW tile, every sibling on the tile goes together: the JPG, the RAW, any additional RAW siblings, and `.xmp` sidecars. Nothing is orphaned on disk.

Recycle Bin on local drives

On local drives (typical case), PhotoTaken moves the files to the Windows Recycle Bin. You hear the familiar Recycle Bin sound when the action completes.

The files are recoverable through:

- **Windows Explorer's Recycle Bin**, the normal way, if you notice much later.
- **PhotoTaken's Ctrl/Cmd+Z undo**, the fast way, within the same session. See below.

Selection and scroll position are preserved through the delete: the grid doesn't lose your place, and the next tile after the deleted batch (the "follower") becomes selected so you can immediately continue culling.

The confirmation dialog preference

The default setting shows a confirmation dialog before every Recycle-Bin delete. If you cull at speed and find the confirmation gets in the way, you can suppress it:

Preferences → Files → "Confirm before moving files to the Recycle Bin"

Uncheck it. Subsequent deletes on local drives skip the confirmation dialog and go straight to the Recycle Bin.

Network-drive deletes (see below) **always** confirm regardless of this setting, because the consequences are different.

Ctrl/Cmd+Z undo

Press **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** immediately after a delete. The most recent batch is restored from the Recycle Bin back to its original folder, with full metadata preserved, ratings, color tags, caption, copyright, every XMP field is intact.

The restored thumbnails are also:

- **Reselected**, whatever was selected at delete time is selected again.
- **Scrolled into view**, if the deleted batch was mid-grid, the scroll position restores so you can see what came back.

Ctrl/Cmd+Z works repeatedly, undoing one batch per press in reverse chronological order. The undo history holds up to your last ~50 actions this session, delete batches and tag changes together (large enough that you'll never hit the limit during a normal cull).

Undoing a color tag or star rating change

Ctrl/Cmd+Z isn't only for deletes. Set a rating or a color, on one photo or a whole multi-select batch, and Ctrl/Cmd+Z reverts it to the prior value. A batch change (say, tagging 30 selected photos Green in one keypress) reverts as a single undo step, not 30 separate presses. Because tag undo and delete undo share the same history, undoing repeatedly steps back through your last several actions in the exact order you made them, regardless of whether each one was a

tag or a delete. Tag undo works the same way in the contact sheet and the Viewer, and does not depend on the Recycle Bin or the staged-delete mechanic described below, that mechanic is delete-specific; a tag change reverts by writing the prior value straight back to XMP.

The staged-delete mechanic

The reason undo is instant is that local-drive deletes are **staged** on the same disk before they go to the Recycle Bin. Under the hood:

1. When you press Delete, PhotoTaken moves the files into a hidden directory called `.phototaken-pending-trash/` inside the source folder (which is an O(1) same-disk rename, not a copy).
2. The files stay in the stage dir until one of several events flushes them to the real Recycle Bin: - You close the app (quit flushes every staged batch). - The stage dir grows past its cap. - Individual batches age past a retention limit. - You open a folder that has leftover stage dirs from a prior session (those are flushed immediately on open).
3. **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** moves the most recent staged batch back to its original paths, also O(1).

That's why undo is instant: same-disk renames, not cross-drive copies. The Recycle Bin sound plays because, from Windows' perspective, the eventual flush really does move files to the Recycle Bin, PhotoTaken just delays that flush to buy you an undo window.

The stage dir is named with a leading dot (`.phototaken-pending-trash`) so it sorts out of the way in tree views and doesn't clutter Explorer. On Windows it's also marked with the hidden attribute.

Network drives are different (and behave differently on Windows vs. Mac)

Windows and macOS handle the Recycle Bin / Trash for network volumes differently, and PhotoTaken inherits that platform behavior. The confirmation dialog always appears for network deletes regardless of your Files preference setting, and **the in-app Ctrl/Cmd+Z undo cannot restore a network delete on either platform**, the undo stack only covers the local stage dir.

Windows: network delete is permanent.

Windows does not support a Recycle Bin on network drives (UNC paths, mapped drives that point to a share). The warning dialog says so explicitly. Once you confirm:

- The files are removed permanently. There is no Recycle Bin entry, on the local Mac or anywhere on the share.

- They cannot be recovered through Windows Explorer's Recycle Bin or Ctrl/Cmd+Z. The only recovery path is a backup of the share itself.

Mac: network delete moves to a per-volume Trash on the share.

macOS gives every mounted volume its own Trash. When you delete a file on a network share, macOS moves it to a hidden directory on **that share** named `.Trashes/<your-uid>/`. So:

- The file is no longer in its source folder, and no longer takes up "logical" space there.
- It still occupies disk space on the share, the bytes have not been freed. Until that hidden Trash folder is emptied, the share's free space is unchanged.
- The files are recoverable: use Cmd+Shift+. in Finder to show hidden items inside `/Volumes/<share>/`, navigate into `.Trashes/<your-uid>/`, and drag the file back. Or run `open /Volumes/<share>/.Trashes/$(id -u)` from Terminal.
- This per-volume Trash is **not** the same as your Mac's main Trash icon in the Dock. The Dock Trash only shows items deleted from your Mac's boot volume.

To free space on a Mac network share after deleting, you have to empty that volume's `.Trashes/<your-uid>/` folder yourself, Finder's "Empty Trash" only empties the boot-volume Trash.

The cross-platform pattern: don't delete from a network drive unless you're sure. If in doubt, copy the files locally first, delete locally (where Ctrl/Cmd+Z works), then re-sync.

Deleting from the Viewer

All the above behavior is identical if you press **Delete** while viewing a single image in the Viewer. The Viewer advances to the next image after a successful delete (or closes if the deleted image was the last one), and Ctrl/Cmd+Z there re-opens the Viewer on the restored file.

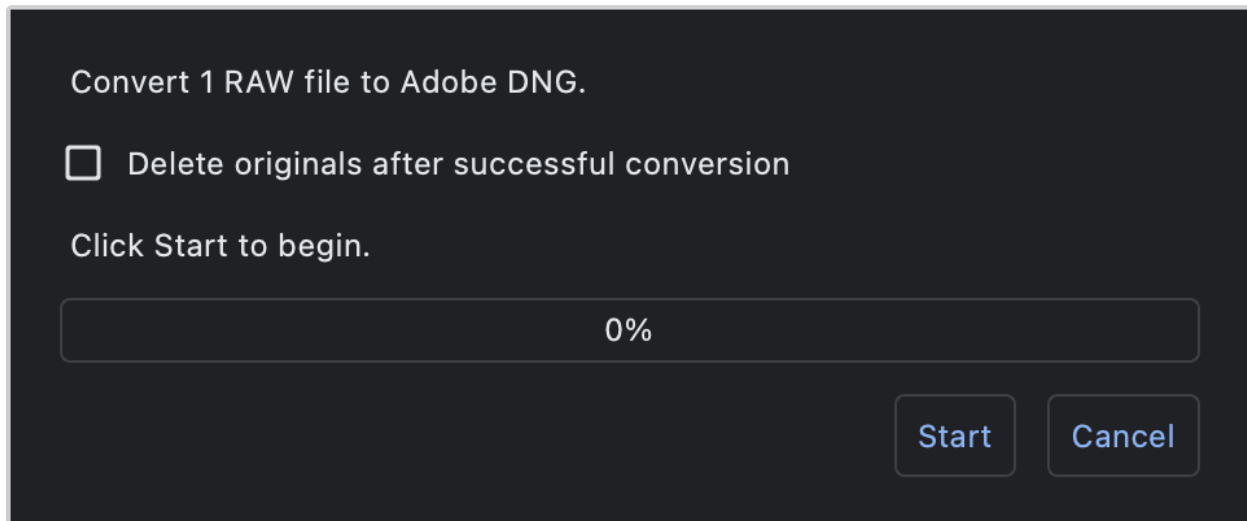
Deleting a folder

Right-click a folder in the Favorite Folders panel and pick **Delete Folder...** to delete the whole folder. Same Recycle Bin / network-permanent semantics apply. Delete Folder is hidden on favorite roots because deleting `D:\` via right-click is a foot-gun we don't offer.

24. Converting RAW to DNG ◆

Convert to DNG turns non-DNG RAW files into Adobe DNG files. DNG is an open RAW format that's backward-compatible with nearly every RAW-aware tool (Lightroom, Camera Raw, Capture One, Photoshop, RawTherapee) and has some practical advantages for a library: one format to manage instead of two dozen, and a spec that's more stable than any single camera manufacturer's proprietary format.

PhotoTaken doesn't implement DNG conversion from scratch, it wraps the free **Adobe DNG Converter** tool, which is the industry-standard reference implementation. Adobe keeps it updated for new cameras at the same pace they update Camera Raw.



The Convert to DNG dialog, ready to start a RAW-to-DNG conversion.

Prerequisite: Adobe DNG Converter

Install Adobe DNG Converter from:

<https://helpx.adobe.com/camera-raw/digital-negative.html>

PhotoTaken detects it at:

- `C:\Program Files\Adobe\Adobe DNG Converter\Adobe DNG Converter.exe`
- `C:\Program Files (x86)\Adobe\Adobe DNG Converter\Adobe DNG Converter.exe`
- Anywhere on your system `PATH` .

If it's not installed when you try to convert, PhotoTaken shows a small dialog with the message and a button that opens the Adobe download page in your default browser. Install, restart PhotoTaken, and try again.

Opening the Convert dialog

Right-click one or more thumbnails whose RAW siblings include at least one non-DNG RAW. The context menu shows:

- **Convert to DNG...**, single selection.
- **Convert to DNG... (N)**, multi-selection, with the count of convertible RAWs.

Tiles that already have a DNG sibling, meaning the conversion has already happened for that shot, are **skipped** from the count, and if the whole selection has nothing left to convert, the menu entry is hidden entirely. This is how the feature protects itself against double-conversion.

Click the menu entry. The Convert to DNG modal dialog opens.

The dialog

- **Heading.** States "Convert N RAW file(s) to Adobe DNG."
- **Delete originals checkbox.** Off by default. See below.
- **Status label.** Shows "Click Start to begin." initially, then "(i/N) filename" per file, then a final summary.
- **Progress bar.** Fills 0 to N as each conversion lands.
- **Start / Cancel buttons** at the bottom.

Click **Start** to run the conversion. The Start button disables and the Delete-originals checkbox locks for the duration of the run.

Delete originals after successful conversion

The checkbox controls what happens to the source RAW once the DNG is written:

- **Off (default):** the source RAW (and its `.xmp` sidecar if there is one) stays on disk alongside the new DNG. Each shot's tile now carries both formats; the tile caption updates to show the combined extensions (e.g. `IMG_0001.JPG/NEF/DNG`).
- **On:** once the DNG is on disk and verified as readable, the source RAW and its `.xmp` sidecar are removed. The tile's RAW list reflects only the DNG going forward.

Your last checkbox state is remembered across sessions via `Settings.dng_delete_originals`. If you prefer to always delete originals, flip the checkbox on once and it stays on next time you open the dialog.

Metadata preservation

Adobe DNG Converter preserves **EXIF, IPTC, and XMP** from the source RAW when it writes the DNG. All of these survive:

- Capture metadata (camera, lens, date, aperture, shutter, ISO, etc.).
- Your PhotoTaken color tag and star rating (stored in XMP).
- Any IPTC fields you've set (creator, copyright, caption, keywords, etc.).
- GPS coordinates, when present.

You can verify with `exiftool -Rating -Label -Caption-Abstract file.dng` or just by opening the DNG in Lightroom and looking for your tags. Round-trip through the converter should be invisible to downstream tools.

Progress and cancel

The dialog updates per file:

```
Converting 50 file(s)...\n(0/50)  IMG_0001.NEF\n(1/50)  IMG_0001.NEF\n(1/50)  IMG_0002.NEF\n(2/50)  IMG_0002.NEF\n...\n(50/50) IMG_0050.NEF\nDone. Converted 50, skipped 0, errors 0.
```

The progress bar hits 100% only after the last file actually finishes, the bar doesn't get ahead of the work.

Cancel stops the run after the currently-converting file finishes. Any already-converted files stay on disk; no partial DNG is left behind for the one that was in flight at cancel time. The dialog's Cancel button becomes **Close** once the run has stopped.

Live tile updates

Tiles update in the grid **live** as each conversion lands, you don't have to wait for the whole batch to finish and re-scan the folder. As soon as a DNG writes for a given tile:

- The tile's caption updates to include the new DNG extension in the slash-joined list.
- The tile's internal RAW list grows to include the DNG path.
- The tile's tooltip updates to list the new path.

Where the DNG lands

Each DNG is written in the **same folder** as its source RAW. If you multi-select across multiple folders, each conversion lands next to its own source. PhotoTaken doesn't have a "convert all to a single output folder" option, that would break the pairing rules and make the DNGs hard to associate back to their JPG + RAW siblings.

The Ctrl/Cmd+drag RAW format preference

Once you have tiles that carry multiple RAW formats (e.g. a NEF plus a DNG after a keep-originals conversion), Ctrl/Cmd+drag needs to pick which format to ship when you drag externally. PhotoTaken uses a **persistent preference** set via a context-menu submenu, see Chapter 25 Drag and drop for the full flow.

Why the menu entry hides for already-converted tiles

If a tile's RAW list already contains a DNG, either because the tile is a JPG + DNG pair with no camera-native RAW at all, or because a previous Convert with keep-originals landed a DNG alongside the NEF, the **Convert to DNG...** menu entry is hidden for that tile.

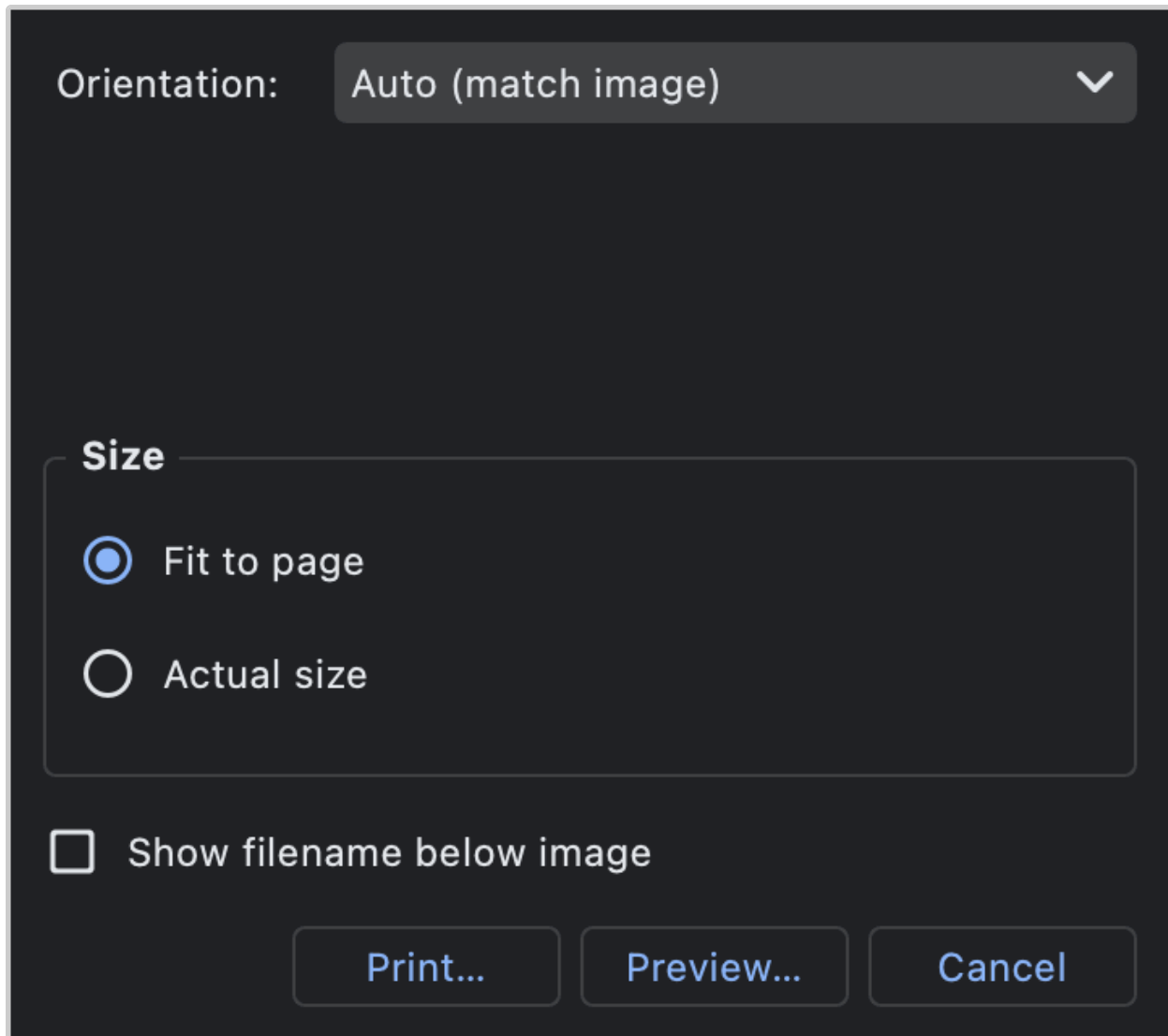
This prevents double-conversions (DNG → DNG, which would do nothing useful) and keeps the menu cleaner when you're walking a folder where some shots are converted and some aren't. For a mixed-selection where some tiles qualify and others don't, the menu entry appears with a count reflecting only the convertible ones.

24a. Printing ♦

PhotoTaken has two print paths, both wrapped in their own options dialog with a live Print Preview window: single-image printing (one photo at a time) and contact-sheet printing (a paginated grid of thumbnails with optional labels). Both honor your printer's defaults for paper size and margins; the dialogs only expose the choices that matter for photo output.

The Preview windows are non-modal: you can leave them open and tweak any option in the parent options dialog, and the preview re-renders in place as you change orientation, columns, captions, or any other field. Click **Print** inside the preview (top toolbar) to send to the printer directly from the preview, or close the preview and click **Print...** in the options dialog. Cancel either dialog to back out of the whole flow with no print job sent.

Both flows also remember your last-used choices for the duration of the session, so a second print picks up where the first one left off.



The Print Image options dialog: orientation, fit, and caption.

Single-image print

Trigger this path one of three ways:

- **Contact sheet**, with exactly one thumbnail highlighted: press **Ctrl/Cmd+P**, or click **Print...** on the toolbar.
- **Viewer**, while looking at a single image: press **Ctrl/Cmd+P**.
- **Viewer**, right-click menu: choose **Print....**

The **Print Image** options dialog appears:

- **Orientation.** *Auto (match image)* picks portrait or landscape based on the image's own aspect ratio (default). *Portrait* and *Landscape* force the page orientation regardless of the image.
- **Size.** *Fit to page* (default) scales the image to fill the printable area while preserving the aspect ratio. *Actual size* prints at the image's native pixel resolution mapped through the printer's DPI; if the image is bigger than the page, it is clipped at the edges (centered).
- **Show filename below image.** When checked, draws the image filename centered at the bottom of the page, in a small caption strip. The image area shrinks to make room.
- **Preview...** Opens the live Print Preview window. It honors all the choices above and re-renders automatically when you tweak any of them. Use the preview's toolbar to zoom, pan, switch pages (irrelevant for single-image, only one page), or click its own **Print** button to send the job. Close the preview to keep iterating.
- **Print...** Closes the preview (if open) and opens the standard system print dialog (Windows Print dialog on Windows, the macOS print sheet on Mac). Pick a printer, paper size, and so on, then **Print**.

When **Print...** is invoked from the contact sheet without a pre-decoded image (the viewer always has one decoded), PhotoTaken decodes the full-size image on a worker thread before showing the options dialog. The decode normally takes a fraction of a second; for very large RAW files on slow disks it can be a beat longer. The UI stays responsive throughout.

Contact-sheet print

Press **Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+P**, or click **Print Contact Sheet...** on the toolbar. The **Print Contact Sheet** options dialog appears:

- **Columns.** How many thumbnails fit across the page (2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 8). Fewer columns means larger thumbnails with sharper output; more columns fits more frames per page. The default is 4.
- **Show filename.** Prints the filename on the first label line below each thumbnail.
- **Show date taken.** Prints the photo's capture date and time (YYYY-MM-DD HH:MM) on the second label line, read from the photo's EXIF `DateTimeOriginal`. Files with no capture date fall back to the file's modification time so the line is never blank.
- **Show file size.** Prints the file size (B / KB / MB) on the second label line. If both date/time and size are on, they share the second line separated by spaces.
- **Show color tag.** Prints a colored swatch followed by the color name on the third label line.
- **Show rating.** Prints the star rating on the third label line.

- **Print scope.** *All visible images* prints every tile currently visible on the contact sheet (so any active color or rating filter applies). *Selected images only* prints just the tiles that are highlighted; this radio is disabled if nothing is selected.
- **Preview...** Opens the live Print Preview window. The preview paginates correctly: at 4 columns and a typical page you'll usually fit 16 to 20 thumbnails per page, with as many pages as needed to cover the chosen scope. Every option change in the parent dialog re-renders the preview automatically.
- **Print...** Closes the preview (if open) and opens the standard system print dialog. Pick a printer and **Print**.

The label rows only consume vertical space when at least one of their fields is on, so a sheet with **Show filename** alone is markedly more thumbnail-dense than one with all five fields enabled. Each thumbnail itself is square (matching the contact-sheet grid), so very wide or very tall images are letterboxed inside the cell.

Thumbnails are rendered from whatever resolution is already loaded in the grid, which is governed by the **Thumbnail size** slider in the toolbar (and the matching preference). If a sheet looks soft, raise the grid's thumbnail size before printing, or drop to fewer columns to make each printed thumbnail larger relative to the loaded pixels.

Tips

- The Preview window is the cheapest way to dial in column count and label combinations: it shows exactly the page-count and density you'll get, with no real ink spent.
- If you want a quick proof of a culling session, set a color filter (say, Green-only), open Print Contact Sheet, leave the scope on **All visible images**, and the resulting sheet covers just the shots you'll use.
- For a focused proof of a few hand-picked frames, hold **Ctrl/Cmd** to multi-select tiles, then open Print Contact Sheet and switch the scope to **Selected images only**.
- Auto orientation in the single-image print is usually what you want for landscape-vs-portrait subjects; only override it when you specifically want, say, a wide landscape to print rotated 90 degrees onto a portrait page.

24b. Export / Convert ◆

PhotoTaken can turn your finished work into web or client-ready copies, or convert a batch of images to another format, without round-tripping through an editor. Select one or more rendered images (JPEG, TIFF, PNG, or WebP), right-click, and choose **Export / Convert....**

This is deliberately a delivery and conversion tool, not an editor. It writes the image as it already is, in the format you pick, resized and optionally watermarked. RAW is never exported: for a RAW+JPEG pair the paired JPEG is used, and a RAW-only selection is skipped (RAW has no finished render to deliver).

Export / convert 3 image(s) to JPEG.

Format: JPEG

Resize (longest side): 2048 px (web) 2048 px

Quality: 85

☐ Add a logo watermark (PNG)

Logo PNG: Browse...

Logo position: Bottom right

Logo opacity: 100 %

Logo size: 18 %

☒ Copy copyright and IPTC (never GPS)

Filename suffix: -web

Destination folder: Browse...

Export Cancel

The Export / Convert dialog, with format, size, and watermark options.

Options

- **Format.** Choose the output: **JPEG**, **PNG**, **TIFF**, or **WebP**. The encoder settings below change to match the format, so you only ever see the controls that apply.
- **Resize (longest side).** A preset (2048 px for web, 1600 px, 1024 px for email), full size, or a custom long edge. Images are downscaled with high-quality resampling and never upscaled. This applies to every format.
- **Quality (JPEG and WebP).** 1 to 100; 85 is a good default for web delivery. Higher means better quality and a larger file.
- **Lossless (WebP).** Encode WebP with no quality loss (larger files, exact pixels) instead of the quality slider.
- **Compression level (PNG).** 0 (fastest, largest) to 9 (slowest, smallest). PNG is always lossless; the level only trades encode time for file size.
- **Compression (TIFF).** LZW or ZIP/Deflate (both lossless and smaller) or none (uncompressed, largest). LZW is the default.
- **Logo watermark (optional).** Point at a transparent PNG of your logo and choose its corner, opacity, and size (a percent of the output's long edge). The logo is composited after resizing so it stays crisp at the delivered size. The logo file is remembered as soon as you pick it, so it is already filled in next time, even if you leave the dialog with **Cancel**. That is deliberate: hunting down your logo PNG again is tedious, and the file chooser already reopens in the folder you last browsed. The rest of the dialog behaves normally, so **Cancel** still throws away changes to format, size, quality, and destination.
- **Place on image... (single image only).** When the selection is exactly one image and the watermark is on, a **Place on image...** button appears next to the watermark options. It opens that photo enlarged with the logo composited on top, starting centered and fairly large, and works like a Photoshop free transform:
 - **Move:** drag the logo body (the pointer shows a move cursor).
 - **Stretch:** drag any corner handle. By default each corner stretches freely (you can squash or elongate the logo); **hold Shift while dragging to keep the original proportions**. The grab cursor is a double-headed arrow aligned to the corner.
 - **Rotate:** drag the small rotate handle just off the top-right corner (or grab just outside any corner); the pointer becomes a curved-arrow cursor and the logo turns about its center.
 - **Opacity:** the slider under the image.

Use this placement records the transform; the export then composites the logo at exactly that position, size, and angle instead of in a fixed corner. Everything is stored as a fraction of the image, so it lands in the same relative spot and size whether you export full-size or resized. It is per-export (not remembered after you close the dialog), and is offered for one image at a time because the whole point is positioning against that specific picture; multi-image batches keep

using the corner option. Choosing a different logo PNG clears a placement you had set. - **Copy copyright and IPTC (never GPS)**. On by default. Your copyright notice, creator, caption, and keywords are carried onto the exported file, but GPS coordinates are never included, so a public gallery cannot reveal where a shot was taken. - **Filename suffix and destination**. Each file is written as `<name><suffix><ext>` (default suffix `-web`) into the folder you choose, with collision-safe naming. The extension follows the format you picked (`.jpg` , `.png` , `.tiff` , or `.webp`).

Everything is color-managed to sRGB on the way out, so a converted file looks the same as the original wherever it is opened.

The batch runs on background workers with a progress dialog you can cancel; failures on individual files are reported at the end without stopping the rest. Your last-used settings are remembered.

HEIC/HEIF photos can be used as input here (read-only), so iPhone shots convert straight to JPEG, PNG, TIFF, or WebP. To convert them on the way in instead, see **Convert HEIC to JPG** in Chapter 11 Ingesting from a card; that path keeps GPS and the original color profile, because it is making your working original rather than a delivery copy. A text/copyright watermark is a planned follow-up.

25. Drag and drop

PhotoTaken's drag-and-drop behavior is tuned for the typical delivery flow: JPEGs fly out to external apps (email, Explorer, Chrome) by default, RAWs go to the editor (Photoshop, Lightroom) when you hold Ctrl/Cmd, and moving files between PhotoTaken's own folders is a one-prompt Move-or-Copy decision at drop time. This chapter covers every drag path.

Dragging a tile out to another app

Select one or more tiles. Click and drag the selection out of the PhotoTaken window to Windows Explorer, an email compose window, a browser's upload area, Photoshop, Lightroom, or anywhere else that accepts dropped files.

Default behavior: the drag carries the tile's **primary file** (the JPG for a paired tile, the RAW for a standalone RAW tile). This matches what most external targets want: Explorer wants a JPG you can preview, email wants a JPG that's small enough to attach, a web upload wants a JPG, etc.

Ctrl/Cmd+drag: hold **Ctrl/Cmd** while starting the drag. The drag now carries the tile's **RAW** file instead of the JPG. For a JPG+RAW pair tile, that's the RAW. For a tile that already has the RAW as its primary (standalone RAW tile), Ctrl/Cmd has no effect, the RAW is what you were going to get anyway.

Why Ctrl/Cmd, not Alt: Alt+drop in Windows Explorer creates a shortcut instead of copying, which means your RAW would never actually arrive at the destination. Ctrl+drop in Explorer forces a copy, which is harmless and what we want anyway.

Current scope: per-app rules (automatically send RAW to Photoshop / Lightroom, JPG elsewhere, without the Ctrl/Cmd modifier) are on the roadmap but haven't shipped. For now, Ctrl/Cmd is a per-drag modifier.

Multi-RAW tiles and the format preference

When a tile carries more than one RAW format, typically a NEF and a DNG after a Convert with keep-originals, for example, Ctrl/Cmd+drag needs to decide which RAW to ship. It doesn't ask you at drag time (see below for why); instead it consults a **per-session preference** you set via the context menu.

To set the preference:

1. Right-click a tile whose RAW list includes multiple formats.
2. Hover the **Ctrl/Cmd+drag RAW as** submenu.
3. Pick from: - **Camera-native (default)**, ships the tile's first RAW, which is the camera-native format (NEF or CR2 or whatever, by the preference order in Chapter 10). - One checkable entry per RAW extension present in your current selection, pick **DNG** to ship DNGs instead, pick **NEF** to ship NEFs, etc.

The submenu only appears when the current selection contains at least one tile with multiple RAW siblings, single-RAW selections don't need a chooser.

Your choice persists in `settings.json` (field `raw_drag_format`). Every subsequent Ctrl/Cmd+drag uses it silently, until you change it again. Close and reopen PhotoTaken and the preference is still in effect.

The preference is empty by default (meaning "first RAW in the tile's list, which is camera-native"), which matches what you'd expect on fresh install.

Why the format picker isn't a mid-drag prompt

A dialog popping up **mid-drag** would be the obvious design, "which format?" asked right when you start the drag. We tried this. It doesn't work, for a reason rooted in Qt's drag-and-drop model:

Qt calls the widget's drag-start handler **AFTER** the user has already crossed the drag-initiation threshold (mouse button down, mouse moved enough). At that point Qt is mid-gesture. A modal dialog opened from inside drag-start:

1. Opens its own event loop and blocks.
2. The user clicks a button to pick a format. That click is a mouse-release from Qt's perspective.
3. The dialog closes and drag-start returns.
4. Qt looks for the held mouse button to continue the drag, doesn't find it (the click on the dialog button consumed it), and kills the drag. No drop happens at the destination app.

This is not a bug we could paper over. A persistent preference you set once, then use silently at drag time, gets the same UX benefit without the mouse-state problem.

Moving and copying within PhotoTaken

You can drag selected tiles from the contact sheet onto a different folder in the Favorite Folders panel, or onto a different tab in the Tabs strip. PhotoTaken handles this as an **internal** drag, different from the external drag described above.

Default behavior: on drop, PhotoTaken shows a **Move / Copy / Cancel** prompt so the action is explicit. Photographers move files often enough (pulling delivery selects into a `Selects/` folder, for example) and copy often enough (making a derivative set for a different client) that the app doesn't pick one by default.

Ctrl/Cmd held on drop: suppresses the prompt and forces a **Copy**. Useful when you already know what you want.

RAW+JPEG pairs and multi-RAW tiles always move or copy together. Every sibling on the tile travels as a unit; nothing is left orphaned.

Dropping Explorer files into PhotoTaken

You can drag files in from Windows Explorer onto:

- The **contact sheet**, copies into the active folder.
- A **folder in the Favorite Folders panel**, copies into that folder.
- A **tab in the Tabs strip**, copies into that tab's folder.

All three paths honor RAW+JPEG pairing: if you drag in a `IMG_0001.JPG` + `IMG_0001.NEF` pair, both land and PhotoTaken shows them as a single paired tile.

External target compatibility

Different apps receive files dropped from other apps differently. PhotoTaken's drag advertises the standard Windows file-list formats, which most apps accept. Notable cases:

Windows Explorer: works perfectly. Drag a selection into an Explorer window to copy files there.

Email clients (Outlook, Thunderbird): works as attachment drops.

Photoshop, Lightroom: accept file drops natively. Ctrl/Cmd+drag to send RAW to your editor is the primary use case the feature is designed around.

Chrome, Firefox (for file-upload areas on web pages): partial. Browsers historically look for file-content drops (CFSTR_FILECONTENTS + CFSTR_FILEDESCRIPTOR formats), not just a list of file paths. Qt's default drag only offers the path list. A file-list drop typically causes the browser to **open the file://URL in a new tab** instead of attaching it to the upload widget. Workaround: drag the file into Explorer first, then use the upload widget's Choose File button pointing at the filesystem. A proper shell-level drag source that provides CFSTR_FILECONTENTS is on the roadmap.

Directory Opus (DOPus): requires a specific DOpus preference: `dragdrop_async = False` . With the default async setting, DOpus tries to read the dragged file's data after Qt has already freed the data object, and the drop silently fails. Set `dragdrop_async = False` in DOpus preferences and drops work.

DaVinci Resolve, Final Cut: not tested; file drops may or may not work depending on the version and what the app expects.

Troubleshooting drag that doesn't arrive

If a drag from PhotoTaken to another app produces nothing at the destination:

1. Try dragging to Windows Explorer first. If that works, the issue is the destination app, not PhotoTaken.
2. If it doesn't work to Explorer either, restart PhotoTaken and the destination app.
3. If it's a browser upload area, expect it not to work (see above), use the Choose File button with a staged folder.
4. If it's DOpus, flip the `dragdrop_async` preference.

Contact support@lormarsoft.com with the destination app name and version if you hit a case we haven't covered.

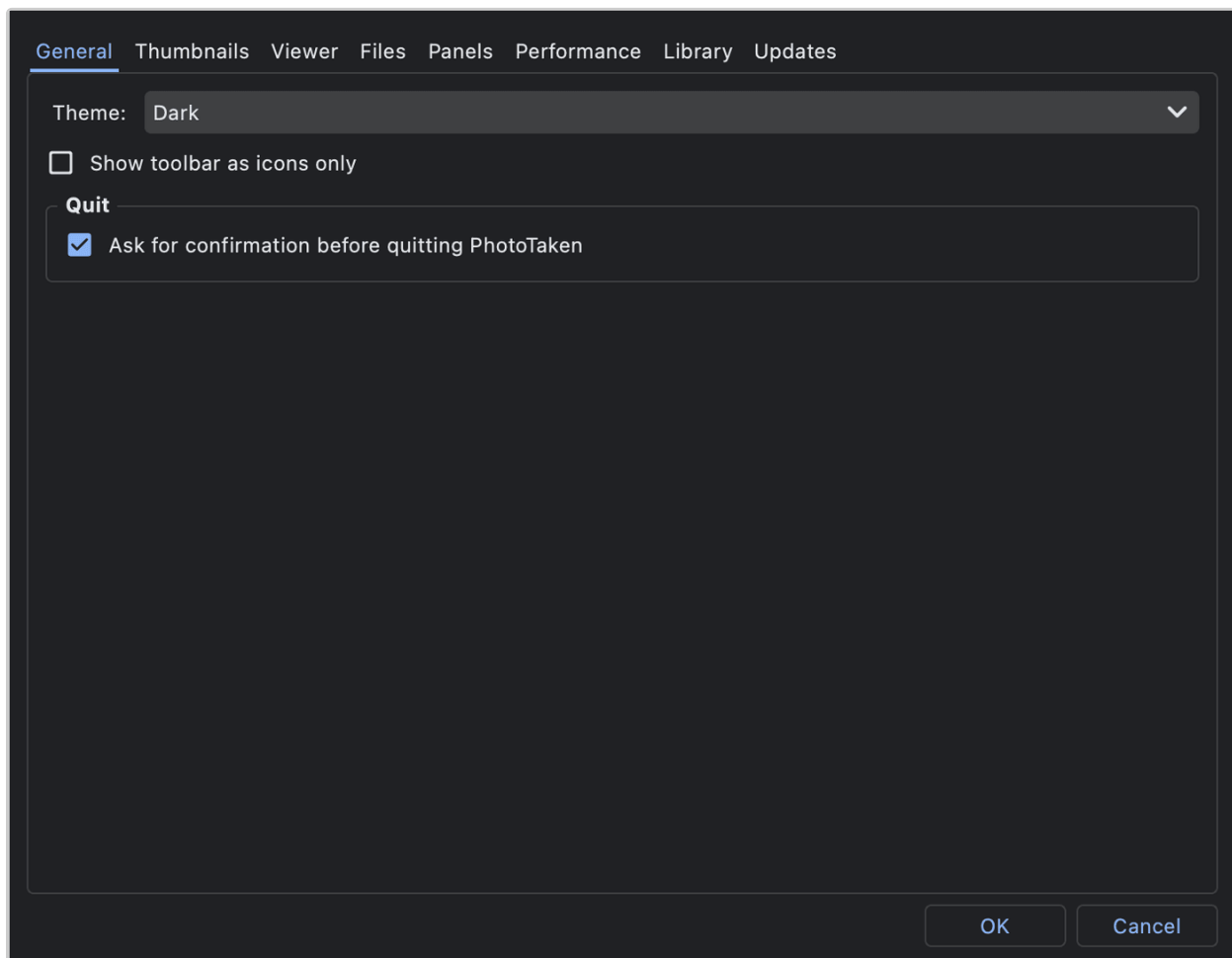
Part VII, Reference

26. Preferences

The **Preferences** dialog (Ctrl/Cmd+, on the toolbar) is where you tune app-wide behavior. It's intentionally short, nine tabs, a handful of settings each, because PhotoTaken is opinionated about its defaults and most photographers never need to change them. This chapter walks every tab and every setting so you know what's adjustable if you do want to tune.

Changes take effect **immediately** when you click OK, no restart needed. Clicking Cancel discards every edit made since the dialog opened.

Every setting in the dialog ends up in `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\settings.json` (see Appendix B).



General

Theme. A dropdown with two options: **Dark** (default) and **Light**. Same toggle as the toolbar Light/Dark button; changing it here applies immediately.

Show toolbar as icons only. A checkbox (default off). With it off, each button shows its label centered under the icon, which keeps the whole toolbar compact enough to fit its many buttons. When on, the toolbar drops every button label and shows just the icon; the label still appears as a tooltip when you hover. Turning it on is useful when the toolbar is crowded and you'd rather see the contact sheet take up that vertical space. Off by default since the labels are helpful while you're learning the app.

Ask for confirmation before quitting PhotoTaken. A checkbox (default on). When on, closing the main window pops the familiar "Are you sure you want to quit?" dialog. Turn it off and PhotoTaken quits immediately when you click the close button or press the OS quit shortcut.

That's it for the General tab, PhotoTaken doesn't expose a font picker, color picker, or custom theme builder. The two bundled themes are the whole deal.

Thumbnails

Default thumbnail size. A slider matching the contact-sheet's size slider, with the same nine preset steps (128, 160, 192, 224, 256, 320, 384, 448, 512 px). Sets the size every newly-opened tab uses. The per-tab runtime size (if you've moved the contact-sheet slider or size dropdown for a specific folder) overrides this default; Preferences sets the starting point.

Default sort order. A dropdown matching the contact-sheet's sort dropdown. Same ten options (five fields × ascending / descending). Applied to newly-opened tabs.

Display fields. Three checkboxes, **Date**, **File size**, **Star rating**, controlling which caption rows appear under every thumbnail. Rating defaults on; Date and Size default off.

All three choices propagate to open tabs as well, not just new ones. Toggling File size while a folder is open immediately adds or removes that row from every tile's caption.

Grid Lines group. A checkbox, **Show lines between thumbnails** (default **on**), plus a **Line color** picker and a **Line thickness** spinbox (1 to 3 px). The checkbox is the same switch as the **Grid Lines** button on the toolbar and the **!** key in the grid; flip any one and the other two follow. PhotoTaken draws thin separator lines through the gaps between the tiles, so the contact sheet reads as a grid of cells rather than photos floating on a background. Turn the checkbox off for

the plain, borderless grid. The lines run the full width and height of the block of photos and close around the outside, and each cell encloses the whole tile: thumbnail, caption rows, and the color and rating buttons. A last row that doesn't fill the width is boxed only as far as the photos actually go, so there are never empty cells trailing off to the right.

The default color is a mid gray that stays quiet against both the dark and the light theme. Pick a different one if you want the separation stronger (or nearly invisible), and raise the thickness to 2 or 3 px if a hairline is hard to see on a high-density display. The color and thickness controls are greyed out while the checkbox is off, since they'd have nothing to affect. Everything takes effect the moment you click OK, on open folders as well as new ones, and the choice persists across restarts.

Grid lines are drawn purely on top of the laid-out grid; they don't change the thumbnail size, the tile spacing, or how many photos fit per row, and they cost nothing measurable while scrolling. They also don't apply to the printed contact sheet, which has its own layout options (see Chapter 24a).

Culling group. A single checkbox: **Advance to the next photo after applying a color or rating** (default off). When on, pressing any rating key (0-5) or any color key (including the backslash clear) in the thumbnail grid or the single-image viewer automatically advances the selection to the next visible photo after the tag is applied. The advance is single-select only, stops at the last visible photo, and is suppressed in compare mode and slideshow mode. Pressing **U** in the grid or viewer toggles this same checkbox without opening Preferences. See Chapter 12, Auto-advance while culling for the full details.

Viewer

Slide interval. A spinbox ranging from **0.5 to 60 seconds**, in half-second increments. Default is 4.0 seconds. Controls the per-image hold time during a Slideshow run (see Chapter 15).

Viewer Window: open viewer and slideshow at main window size. A checkbox, default **off**. When off (the normal viewing mode), double-clicking a thumbnail or starting a slideshow takes over the whole screen the way you'd expect. When on, both open inside the current main window's bounds instead. The use case is screen recordings and demos. If you size the main window to roughly half the screen and turn this on, the viewer and slideshow stay inside that window, so the recording captures a comfortable framed view instead of a full-screen take that's hard to read at scale. Toggle it off again when you're done recording (full screen is still the right default for actual editing work).

Re-decode at full resolution when zooming past 1:1. A checkbox, default **on**. When on, crossing 1:1 triggers a background read of the original file and swaps in full-resolution pixels so the zoomed view is genuinely sharp. Turn it off if the brief re-decode pause bothers you and a slightly soft upscale is acceptable.

Show overview navigator when zoomed in. A checkbox, default **on**. When on, a small thumbnail of the whole frame appears in the top-right corner of the viewer whenever the image overflows the viewport, with a rectangle marking the visible region. Turn it off to keep the viewer clear.

Focus peaking sensitivity. A slider (0 to 255). Lower values highlight more of the frame; higher values highlight only the sharpest edges. Applies to the **F** peaking overlay in the viewer.

Highlight clipping threshold / Shadow clipping threshold. Two sliders controlling the **E** exposure overlay: highlights at or above the highlight threshold paint red; shadows at or below the shadow threshold paint blue.

Read actual RAW sensor data (slower). A checkbox under **Focus & Exposure Overlays**, default **on**. When on, for RAW files, the **F**, **H**, and **E** overlays decode the actual demosaiced RAW sensor data (half-size, no auto-brighten) instead of reading the embedded JPEG preview, so highlight headroom shows honestly. The half-size decode is fast enough to make this the default. When off, those tools read the embedded preview, the lightest option, but not a true sensor read. See Preview vs RAW analysis above.

Focus peaking color, Clipping highlight color, Clipping shadow color. Three buttons that open color pickers for the overlay colors: the **F** peaking overlay, and the blown-highlight and crushed-shadow markers of the **E** clipping overlay. Change them from the defaults (red peaking, red highlights, blue shadows) to whatever stands out best against your subject matter.

Files

Confirm before moving files to the Recycle Bin. A checkbox, default **on**. When on, every local-drive delete shows a confirmation dialog listing what's about to be deleted. When off, local-drive deletes skip the confirmation and go directly to the Recycle Bin (you can still Ctrl/Cmd+Z if you change your mind).

The tab also shows a short grey note explaining that network-drive deletes **always** confirm regardless of this setting, they're permanent, and a confirmation on them is non-negotiable for safety.

Panels

Three identical rows, one for each dock (**Folders**, **Tabs**, **Metadata**). Each row has:

- **Side dropdown**, Left or Right.
- **Visible checkbox**, whether the dock is shown in the main window.

Changing either value in this tab moves or hides the corresponding dock immediately in the background. You can see the effect before clicking OK, useful when you want to set up a specific layout across all three docks in one go.

The same values are updated live when you drag docks in the main window or click the toolbar toggles, so the Panels tab is always a mirror of the current layout.

Performance

Two caches are tunable here, plus the cloud preview toggle and an option for Find Photo Folders. Tuning the caches up helps on slow disks and huge libraries; leaving them at default is fine for most users.

Thumbnail cache (maximum entries). Range: 100 to 10,000. Default: 2,000. This is the in-memory LRU cache of decoded thumbnail pixmaps. At the default, a folder with a few thousand images fits comfortably and tab switches are instant. Bump higher on machines with plenty of RAM and very large libraries; bump lower (unlikely to help but possible) on memory-constrained systems.

Folder snapshot cache (maximum folders). Range: 1 to 50. Default: 8. This is the LRU of per-folder **snapshot** records, the scanned file list, pairing decisions, and tag data for a folder. When you switch to a tab whose folder is in this cache, the grid rehydrates instantly (in milliseconds) while a background revalidate scan reconciles any on-disk changes.

Set this higher if you regularly rotate between, say, twelve folders during a session and want every one of them to rehydrate instantly. Lower only if memory is genuinely tight.

Neither cache affects what's stored on disk, both are memory-only, rebuilt from scratch on each launch.

Show previews for online-only cloud photos. A checkbox, default **on**. When on, cloud tiles show the real preview the operating system already has (from OneDrive on Windows, iCloud on Mac) with a small cloud badge in the corner, without downloading the file. Turn it off to go back to plain cloud badges.

Find Photo Folders: show early results from Spotlight (or Everything) while scanning. ♦ A checkbox, default **off**. When on, a Find Photo Folders scan also asks the system's own file index what it already knows and lists those folders right away, before the scan reaches them: Spotlight on a Mac, the Everything search program on Windows. The scan still checks every folder and has the last word, so the finished list is the same with this on or off; only how soon folders appear can differ. On a Mac, Spotlight is often switched off for external and network drives, where this adds nothing, and on a fast drive the scan usually finishes first. On Windows it needs Everything installed and running; without it, scans simply run as usual. If the checkbox is grayed out with a note beneath it, this copy of PhotoTaken is missing Everything's helper file, which the installer includes.

Keyboard

Pick a key layout (**PhotoTaken**, **Lightroom Classic**, or **Photo Mechanic**) and change individual keys: click a key button, then press the new key. Changes apply when you click OK. The full walkthrough, including what each layout does, is under Changing the keys in Chapter 27.

Updates

Check for updates automatically. A checkbox, default **on**. When on, PhotoTaken fetches a small JSON file from a known URL at launch time and, if a newer version than the running one is advertised, shows an "Update Available" dialog with release notes and a download-page button.

If you leave PhotoTaken open, it checks again once a day. A newer version found that way doesn't pop anything up, so it never interrupts you mid-cull or covers a slideshow for a client. Instead, a red dot and the words **Update available** appear at the bottom right of the main window. The same marker appears after the launch dialog, so closing that dialog doesn't lose it. Click the marker to bring the dialog back. It stays for the rest of the session, and every launch checks again, so it keeps showing until you install the new version. While it's showing, this tab also names the version that's available.

When the box is off, no check happens. Turning it on takes effect within a few hours, with no restart.

The update check is a simple HTTPS GET of a JSON file; it doesn't upload anything about your machine or library. If the network is unreachable or the JSON is malformed, the check silently fails and you see nothing.

The update URL itself is configurable in `settings.json` (field `update_url`) but not surfaced in the Preferences UI, there's no reason most users would want to change where the check points.

Hardening on the dialog itself. Two safety guards apply when the Update Available dialog opens:

1. The **Open** button only fires when the JSON's `download_url` is HTTPS and the host is `lormarsoft.com`, `www.lormarsoft.com`, or `github.com`. Any other host (including a hijacked update server pointing at a malicious mirror) suppresses the button, you'll still see the version notice, but you won't be one click away from an attacker-supplied download.
2. The release-notes body renders as **plain text** (never as HTML or Qt rich text), so a tampered update JSON can't smuggle a clickable phishing link into the dialog. Whatever the server sent is shown verbatim.

These guards are local to the running PhotoTaken, they don't replace TLS, but they mean a single compromise of the update server can't quietly push every customer to an arbitrary download.

What's not in Preferences

A few things you might look for but won't find:

- **Language.** PhotoTaken is English-only. Localization isn't a 2026 priority.
- **Per-folder settings.** Settings apply globally. The only per-folder state that persists is the `_shootdesk_tags.json` cache.
- **Saved export presets.** PhotoTaken does export derivatives (see Chapter 24b, Export / Convert), but there's no saved-preset manager in Preferences, you set the options in the Export dialog each time.

If one of the above would be valuable to your workflow, support@lormarsoft.com is the place to say so.

27. Keyboard shortcuts

PhotoTaken is a keyboard-first app. Culling fast means the shortcuts below become muscle memory. This chapter is the complete reference, organized by the context in which each shortcut applies.

Reading these shortcuts: they're written **Windows/Mac**. **Ctrl/Cmd+P** is the Control key on Windows and the Command (⌘) key on Mac; **Alt/Option+Left** is Alt on Windows and Option (⌥) on Mac. Letter, digit, and arrow keys are the same on both. On a Mac, use Command, not the Control key, for these.

Function keys on a Mac: if **F1**, **F2**, or **F5** seems to do nothing (or changes brightness/volume), your Mac is treating the top row as hardware keys. Press them with **Fn** held (e.g. **Fn+F1**), or enable *System Settings* → *Keyboard* → "Use F1, F2, etc. keys as standard function keys." On Windows, watch for an **Fn Lock** on laptops if an F-key shortcut doesn't register.

◆ marks a shortcut for a Pro-only feature.

Global (any focus)

Shortcut	Action
F1	Open the Help dialog (tight version of this manual); works everywhere, including the Viewer
?	Show or hide a quick shortcut cheat sheet for the current view (grid or viewer)
Ctrl/Cmd+,	Open the Preferences dialog
Ctrl/Cmd+1	Toggle the Favorite Folders panel
Ctrl/Cmd+2	Toggle the Tabs panel
Ctrl/Cmd+3	Toggle the Metadata panel
Ctrl/Cmd+4	Toggle the Keywords panel
Ctrl/Cmd+W	Close the active tab
Ctrl/ Cmd+Shift+T	Reopen the most recently closed tab
Alt/Option+Left	Tab Back
Alt/Option+Right	Tab Forward
Ctrl/Cmd+F	Focus the toolbar Search box
Ctrl/Cmd+I	Open the Edit IPTC Info dialog for the current selection
Ctrl/Cmd+E	Open the Edit EXIF Info dialog for the current selection ◆
Ctrl/Cmd+P	Print the current image ◆
Ctrl/ Cmd+Shift+P	Print a contact sheet of the visible thumbnails ◆
Ctrl/ Cmd+Shift+E	Open Export / Convert for the current selection ◆
Ctrl/Cmd+Z	Undo the most recent delete, color tag, or star rating change
F5	Start a slideshow on the current selection (needs 2+ selected)
C	Open Compare view (needs 2 to 4 selected; 3-4 use a 2x2 grid)
Enter	Open the selected image in the Viewer

Contact sheet (grid focused)

Navigation:

Shortcut	Action
← / → / ↑ / ↓	Move selection by one tile in that direction
Shift+arrow	Extend selection by one tile in that direction
Ctrl/Cmd+click	Toggle one tile's selection without affecting others
Shift+click	Select a range from previous click to clicked tile
Esc	Clear the current selection

Deletion and rename:

Shortcut	Action
Delete	Delete the current selection

Ratings (apply to the selection):

Shortcut	Action
0	Clear the star rating
1	Set 1-star rating
2	Set 2-star rating
3	Set 3-star rating
4	Set 4-star rating
5	Set 5-star rating

Color tags (apply to the selection):

Letter	Color
R	Red
O	Orange
Y	Yellow
L	Lime
G	Green
T	Teal
X	Cyan
S	Sky Blue
B	Blue
I	Indigo
V	Violet
P	Purple
K	Pink
M	Magenta
N	Brown
W	White
A	Gray
\	Clear any current color

Focus and exposure (on the thumbnails):

Shortcut	Action
F	Toggle focus peaking on the thumbnails
E	Toggle exposure clipping on the thumbnails
H	Toggle histogram on the thumbnails

Thumbnail view:

Shortcut	Action
!	Show or hide the grid lines between thumbnails

Culling:

Shortcut	Action
U	Toggle "advance to the next photo after tagging" (same as the Preferences checkbox)

Filtering:

Shortcut	Action
D	Cycle the File Type filter forward (All → JPEG → RAW → ... → All), "what am I Displaying"
Shift+D	Cycle the File Type filter backward

D steps through whatever File Type entries the current folder offers, exactly as if you clicked the dropdown. In a folder with no extra types (just JPEGs, say) it toggles between **All** and **JPEG**; in an empty folder it does nothing. See Chapter 16.

Viewer (fullscreen, single image)

Shortcut	Action
← / →	Previous / next image (walking the folder in sort order)
Mouse wheel	Scroll down = next, scroll up = previous (same on Windows and Mac)
+ / =	Zoom in
-	Zoom out
Z	Toggle between Fit and 1:1
Ctrl/Cmd+0	Zoom to Fit
Ctrl/Cmd+1	Zoom to 1:1 (100%)
Ctrl+← / → / ↑ / ↓	Pan the image when zoomed in
F	Toggle the focus-peaking overlay
E	Toggle the exposure-clipping overlay
H	Toggle the histogram overlay
Ctrl/Cmd+P	Print the current image ◆
Esc	Close the Viewer and return to the contact sheet
Delete	Delete the current image (and its RAW siblings)
Ctrl/Cmd+Z	Undo the most recent delete (re-opens the Viewer on the restored image) or tag change
F1	Open the Help dialog
0 - 5	Set / clear the star rating on this image
Color letters	Apply a color tag to this image (same table as above)
\	Clear the color tag
U	Toggle "advance to the next photo after tagging" (same as the Preferences checkbox)

Right-click the image for a popup menu with Color Tag and Star Rating submenus (same effect as the keyboard shortcuts).

Compare (2 to 4 panes)

Shortcut	Action
Tab	Cycle focus: all panes synced, then each pane in turn, then back
← / →	Step the focused pane (or every pane when synced) through the folder
Esc	Close Compare; selection updates to the last-focused pane's image
0 - 5	Set / clear the star rating on focused pane(s)
Color letters	Apply a color tag to focused pane(s)
\	Clear the color tag on focused pane(s)
Delete	<i>Intentionally disabled in Compare, see Chapter 14</i>

Slideshow

Shortcut	Action
Space	Pause / resume auto-advance
← / →	Step manually; resets the auto-advance timer
Esc	Exit slideshow and return to the contact sheet
0 - 5	Set / clear star rating on the current slide
Color letters	Apply a color tag to the current slide
\	Clear the color tag

Dialogs

Most dialogs follow the standard conventions on both platforms:

Shortcut	Action
Enter	OK / Default action
Esc	Cancel
Tab / Shift+Tab	Move focus between fields

The Convert to DNG, Ingest, and Edit IPTC Info dialogs have their own progress/cancel semantics, see the relevant chapters.

Changing the keys

The tables above show the **PhotoTaken** layout, which is the default. You can switch to a layout that matches another photo app, or set your own keys, in **Preferences > Keyboard** (see Chapter 26). The changes apply when you click **OK**, with no restart.

Layouts. The picker at the top of the tab offers three:

- **PhotoTaken.** The keys in this chapter.
- **Lightroom Classic.** **1** to **5** set stars and **0** clears them. **6** is red, **7** yellow, **8** green, **9** blue. Lightroom's **P**, **X**, and **U** are flags, and PhotoTaken has no flags, so those three keys do nothing here. That leaves Purple, Cyan, and the auto-advance switch without a key until you assign one.
- **Photo Mechanic.** The bare digits **1** to **8** set colors, in this order: Purple, Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Brown, Gray. **1** for Purple is certain; **2** to **8** are our best guess and may change. **0** clears the color. Stars move to **Control+1** to **Control+5** on a Mac and **Alt+1** to **Alt+5** on Windows, with **Control/Alt+0** clearing the rating. Photo Mechanic's **T** has no PhotoTaken equivalent, so Teal has no key in this layout.

Changing a key. The list is grouped as **Rating**, **Color**, **Review**, and **View**. Click the key button on a row, then press the key you want. **Esc** cancels. The **Clear** button on each row removes the key, and the row then reads **(none)**.

A key that's already in use. If you press a key that another action has, PhotoTaken shows a "Key in use" box that says, for example, "B is used by Blue. Swap them?" **Swap** gives each action the other's key. **Cancel** changes nothing.

Reset. As soon as you change anything, the layout name gains **(edited)**. **Reset to layout** drops every change and returns to the layout as shipped.

Where the keys show up. The **?** cheat sheet, the color names in menus (**Red (R)** and so on), and button tooltips all read the active keys, so they stay correct after a change.

Keys you can't use. Any key pressed with **Shift** is refused, and so is any **Ctrl/Cmd** combination. The keys the app itself needs are also fixed: the arrows, **Enter**, **Esc**, **Space**, **Tab**, **F1**, **F5**, **Delete**, and **+**, **=**, and **-**. The editor tells you which it is when you try one.

28. Troubleshooting

This chapter is a symptom-based lookup. Each section describes a specific observable problem, the most likely cause, and the fix. If none of the below match what you're seeing, email support@lormarsoft.com with a screenshot and a description of what you were doing when it happened.

The Metadata panel shows "ExifTool not found"

Cause: the bundled ExifTool copy is missing or unreachable.

Fix:

- **If you're running a packaged build**, the bundled ExifTool has been deleted or is otherwise unreadable, on Windows that's `vendor/exiftool/exiftool.exe` in the install folder; on Mac it's inside `PhotoTaken.app/Contents/Resources/vendor/exiftool/`. Reinstall PhotoTaken (re-run the installer, or on Mac drag a fresh copy from the DMG to Applications) to restore it.
- **If you're running from source**, ExifTool needs to be on your system `PATH` :

```
powershell # Windows winget install --id OliverBetz.ExifTool -e
```

```
bash # Mac brew install exiftool
```

Then restart PhotoTaken.

All metadata reads, caption/copyright writes, IPTC editor writes, and Stationery Pad applies depend on ExifTool. Until it's reachable, those operations silently no-op.

The "Convert to DNG..." menu entry doesn't appear

Likely cause 1: no tile in your current selection has a non-DNG RAW sibling to convert. Tiles with only JPEGs have nothing to convert; tiles that already include a DNG are filtered out to prevent double-conversion. Select a tile that has a non-DNG RAW (and doesn't already have a DNG).

Likely cause 2: Adobe DNG Converter isn't installed. The menu entry still appears in this case, but clicking it opens a "please install Adobe DNG Converter" dialog. Install from Adobe's download page (see Chapter 24) and retry.

Thumbnails are slow to appear on a specific drive

Likely cause: slow disk or slow network share. The very first scan of a large RAW folder is bound by disk read speed plus per-file RAW decode time.

Things that help:

- **Second-time-fast.** The same folder reopens much faster because snapshot and thumbnail caches skip the re-decode. If you're always experiencing slow opens, it means the caches aren't retaining the folder (maybe you're rotating through more folders than the snapshot LRU holds).
- **Bump the snapshot LRU.** Preferences → Performance → Folder snapshot cache. Default is 8; increasing to 20 or so helps if you rotate between many folders.
- **Local drives are faster than network shares.** If your library lives on a NAS and feels slow, copying the active shoot local first is often a winning pattern. Ingest already writes locally; the question is only where the rest of the library sits.

Tags (rating, color) that should be on an image aren't showing

Possible causes, in order of likelihood:

1. **The `_shootdesk_tags.json` cache doesn't have them yet.** Open the folder, PhotoTaken will read XMP from every file in the background and reconcile the cache. You'll see tags populate within a few seconds.
2. **The `.xmp` sidecar is missing or in a different folder.** For RAW files, tags live in an adjacent `.xmp` sidecar (named `IMG_0001.xmp` in Standard naming, or `IMG_0001.CR2.xmp` in Photo Mechanic style). If the sidecar got lost during a move, the tags went with it.
3. **Another tool cleared the XMP.** Some batch renamers and "clean up metadata" utilities strip XMP. If you suspect this, check the file's XMP with `exiftool -XMP:Rating -XMP:Label file`.
4. **The file is newly imported and nothing has tagged it yet.** Check your workflow, ingest doesn't auto-tag (but a Stationery Pad applied during ingest can stamp IPTC fields, separate from color/rating).

I accidentally deleted the wrong file(s)

Press **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** immediately. The most recent Recycle-Bin delete restores in full with ratings and color tags intact. Ctrl/Cmd+Z can be pressed multiple times for multiple undo levels.

Exception: network-drive deletes are permanent and Ctrl/Cmd+Z cannot restore them. If you deleted from a network share, check the source drive's built-in recovery if any, or your backup.

If you already quit the app since the delete, the stage dir has been flushed to the system trash. Recover from the **Windows Recycle Bin** (right-click a file → Restore) or the **Mac Trash** (open Trash, right-click the file → Put Back).

I accidentally applied the wrong rating or color tag

Press **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** right away. The most recent color or rating change reverts to its prior value, whether it touched one photo or a whole multi-select batch (the batch reverts together in one press). This shares the same Ctrl/Cmd+Z history as delete undo above, so it always undoes whichever action, tag or delete, happened most recently, and it works the same way in the contact sheet and the Viewer.

A folder shows "no longer available"

Cause: the folder was renamed, moved, or unmounted while PhotoTaken was closed (or, for network shares, while you weren't looking at it). PhotoTaken caches a snapshot of every folder you visit so re-opening is instant, but on next launch, when it goes to rehydrate that snapshot, it now checks that the folder still exists. If the path is gone, the contact sheet shows an empty grid and the folder bar reads

```
<path> – This folder is no longer available (renamed, moved, or unmounted).
```

Fix:

- **If you renamed the folder yourself**, open the new path from the **Favorite Folders** tree (or add it to your favorites). The old name's snapshot stays in the cache and is cleaned up automatically on the next folder visit.
- **If a network share is offline**, reconnect it and click the favorite again.
- **If the folder is genuinely gone** (deleted, drive unmounted permanently), remove it from your favorites via **Favorites...** so it stops appearing.

The same message appears if a network share drops mid-session and you switch to (or refresh) a tab on that share, the back-end scan fails and the grid clears so you don't see stale thumbnails for files that aren't actually there.

The app layout is wrong after an update

Likely cause: the saved layout refers to a display configuration you no longer have (e.g. you used PhotoTaken with a second monitor attached and now you don't).

Fix: toggle each dock off and back on via the toolbar buttons (**Folders, Tabs, Metadata**). Each re-show snaps the dock back to a valid spot within the current window. If that's not enough, quit and delete `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\settings.json`, you'll lose other settings but layout will be clean.

An image opens in a new browser tab instead of attaching to a file upload

Cause: Qt's default drag source offers a file path, which browsers interpret as a `file://` URL to navigate to rather than a file upload.

Workaround: drag the file to Windows Explorer first, then use the web upload's "Choose File" button to pick it from the filesystem. A proper shell-level drag source that browsers would accept as a file upload is on the roadmap (see the "Windows shell drag" item in TASKS.md).

Drop into Directory Opus silently fails

Cause: DOpus' default `dragdrop_async = True` setting. DOpus tries to read the file asynchronously after Qt has already freed the data object.

Fix: in DOpus preferences, set `dragdrop_async = False`. Drops will work after that.

The update check hasn't run / shows nothing

Possible causes:

1. **Preferences → Updates → Check for updates automatically** is unchecked. Turn it on.
2. **PhotoTaken has been open the whole time.** The once-a-day check never pops up a dialog. Look for the red dot and **Update available** at the bottom right of the window, and click it.
3. **Network is unreachable** or the update URL is down. The check silently no-ops in this case; nothing is wrong with the app.
4. **You're already on the latest version.** No dialog appears when there's nothing newer.

A network share goes offline mid-browse

If the active tab's folder is on a network share and the connection drops:

- The grid keeps whatever thumbnails are already in memory until you do something that triggers a re-scan (switch to another tab and back, click **Refresh**, or relaunch the app).

- The next re-scan detects the dead share, clears the grid, and shows a "no longer available" message in the folder bar, see the section above.
- Rating / tagging operations that try to write XMP fail silently while the share is offline.

Fix: reconnect the share, then click the folder again in the **Favorite Folders** panel (or click **Refresh** on its tree entry). The grid will re-populate.

The delete sound didn't play

Cause: PhotoTaken plays the system's standard "move to trash" sound when you delete. If it's silent, that sound has been muted or cleared at the OS level.

Fix: - **Windows:** Sound Settings → Sounds tab → find "Empty Recycle Bin" → set a sound file.
- **Mac:** System Settings → Sound → make sure "Play user interface sound effects" is on (the Trash sound is part of it).

Or shrug it off, the visual "file moves to Recycle Bin / Trash" signal is the authoritative one.

The app won't quit / is stuck

If PhotoTaken hangs on quit (the "Are you sure you want to quit?" dialog won't dismiss, or the process stays alive), most likely cause is an in-flight worker thread that's blocked on a subprocess or a disk I/O.

Fix: Task Manager → End Task on the PhotoTaken process. Your files are unaffected, worst case a queued XMP write dropped, and the next folder open reconciles from XMP. Report the hang to support with what you were doing when it happened.

29. FAQ

Does PhotoTaken modify my original files?

It depends on which field. **Color tags, star ratings, captions, copyright, IPTC fields, and EXIF Orientation (lossless rotate)** are written back into the file's metadata, which modifies the file. PhotoTaken uses ExifTool's `-overwrite_original` mode to write transactionally without leaving `_original` backups.

For RAW files, PhotoTaken writes metadata to the adjacent `.xmp` sidecar instead of the RAW container (which isn't safe to modify). The RAW file itself is untouched by any of the tagging features.

Pixel data is **never** modified. PhotoTaken doesn't crop, re-encode, or re-render any image. Rotate is pure metadata, not a pixel operation.

Where are my tags stored if I switch computers?

In the files themselves (or in `.xmp` sidecars next to RAW files). Copy your photo folder to another machine and every rating, color tag, caption, copyright, and keyword travels with it. You don't need to export or import anything.

Your PhotoTaken-specific configuration (favorites, Stationery Pads, window layout, preferences) lives in `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\settings.json` and is **per-install**, it doesn't travel with the photos. To carry settings to another machine, copy `settings.json` manually.

Will Lightroom / Photo Mechanic see my tags?

Yes. PhotoTaken writes standard `xmp:Rating` and `xmp:Label` tags. Lightroom and Photo Mechanic read the same tags. Caption, copyright, and every IPTC field are also written to the standard tag locations. For RAW files, any copyright the camera embedded is seeded into the sidecar the first time PhotoTaken creates one, so it survives the trip into Lightroom (see *Sidecar files* under Ingest for the details).

One caveat about color labels. Adobe Lightroom and Bridge only recognize five color labels by default, **Red, Yellow, Green, Blue, and Purple**, which are the five whose names match Adobe's built-in Color Label Set. PhotoTaken ships 17 colors, so the other twelve (Orange, Lime, Teal, Cyan, Sky Blue, Indigo, Violet, Pink, Magenta, Brown, White, Gray) don't line up

with a swatch in Adobe apps: a Sky Blue tag comes across as a plain custom-label name rather than a colored swatch. **Nothing is lost, the label text is stored intact in xmp:Label and travels with the file, it just isn't shown as a color.** If you rely on the extra colors and want them to show up as swatches in Lightroom, add matching names to Lightroom's **Metadata > Color Label Set > Edit** so its palette knows them. Photo Mechanic, which lets you name all eight of its color classes, is more forgiving here. If keeping color labels portable to a stock Adobe setup matters to you, sticking to the five standard colors is the safe choice.

The reverse works too. Tag an image in Lightroom with a 4-star rating, come back to PhotoTaken, open the folder, and PhotoTaken picks up the rating via the background XMP reader.

How does PhotoTaken handle iCloud / OneDrive / Dropbox / Google Drive folders with on-demand files?

Carefully, and without downloading your library behind your back. Cloud-provider on-demand folders present each file as a placeholder until first access; opening or reading the file triggers a hydrate (download) of the real content. PhotoTaken detects these placeholders (OneDrive / Dropbox / Google Drive on Windows, and iCloud Drive / Dropbox / OneDrive / Google Drive on Mac) and deliberately leaves them on the cloud.

PhotoTaken's behavior:

- Opening a folder full of placeholders does **not** hydrate them. Each online-only photo shows a tile with a cloud badge; PhotoTaken reads nothing from the file (no thumbnail decode, no ratings/keywords, no EXIF), so browsing never pulls the folder down to your disk. Ratings and color labels still show from the local cache.
- A photo hydrates only when you ask for it: double-click a tile, or select several and choose **Download from cloud**. Once downloaded it behaves like any normal local file. An explicit download pulls the *whole* file down, even on Dropbox and Google Drive on Windows, which otherwise hand over only the bytes an app reads, so the photo really shows as available afterward (the cloud badge clears only once the file is genuinely local).
- Tag writes hydrate too (ExifTool has to read the file's existing metadata before writing), so tagging an online-only photo downloads it first, as expected.
- On Windows, cloud tiles show a real preview pulled from the cloud thumbnail without downloading the file; on Mac they show the plain cloud badge until you download them.
- On Mac, Dropbox online-only files are empty placeholders that an ordinary read will not download, so PhotoTaken pulls them down through macOS's own cloud-file read API (a coordinated read), which materializes the file with no other app involved. Downloads are silent: nothing pops open.

See the "Cloud (online-only) photos" section earlier in this manual for the full workflow.

How do I back up my settings?

Two files hold everything PhotoTaken-specific:

- `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\settings.json` , favorites, theme, panel layout, Stationery Pads, preferences.
- `_shootdesk_tags.json` in each folder you've browsed, the per-folder tag cache (not authoritative, rebuilt from XMP on demand).

Back up the first one if you want your app config preserved. Don't bother backing up the second, it regenerates itself.

Your photos are the important thing, and they're already backed up wherever you keep them, PhotoTaken doesn't create a separate library for them.

Does PhotoTaken work on macOS or Linux?

macOS: yes, fully. Mac is a first-class, officially supported platform. There's a signed, notarized `.dmg` installer (Apple Silicon, macOS 12+), the app bundles its own ExifTool, and every feature in this manual works on Mac. The only day-to-day difference is that Mac uses **Cmd** where Windows uses **Ctrl** (and **Option** for **Alt**); platform-specific behavior like the Trash, cloud "online-only" files, and installation is called out where it differs.

Linux: not supported. PhotoTaken is built on Qt, which is cross-platform, so running from source on Linux will likely produce a working window. But Linux is not a shipping target: there's no packaged build, and we don't test, release, or support it. If you want a similar tool on Linux, digiKam is free, open-source, and professional-grade.

Can I convert DNG back to the original RAW?

No. DNG-to-original-RAW is not a supported operation in Adobe DNG Converter (and therefore not in PhotoTaken). This is why the Delete-originals checkbox in the Convert dialog is off by default, if you delete the NEF/CR2, you don't get it back.

If you want to keep the original RAW indefinitely, run Convert with Delete-originals **off** and both files live side by side on the tile.

How do I report a bug?

Email support@lormarsoft.com with:

- **App version.** Click the **PhotoTaken logo** in the toolbar to open the **About** dialog; it shows the exact version string.
- **OS version.** On Windows: Settings → System → About. On Mac: → About This Mac.
- **Reproduction steps.** What you did leading up to the problem, ideally in a form a second person could follow.
- **What you expected vs. what happened.**
- **Screenshots** of the symptom, especially any error dialog.
- **Relevant files.** If a specific image or folder triggers the issue, sharing that file (or a representative one) helps enormously. Be mindful of any client-confidential content.
- **settings.json** if the issue relates to layout or preferences.

Bug reports that include all of the above turn around fastest.

Is there a trial version?

Yes. PhotoTaken runs free for 14 days, fully featured, with no license key. Choose **Try it free for 14 days** in the welcome window, enter your email, and click **Start free trial**. Nothing is limited during the trial: it is the whole app, not a preview.

The trial is one per computer, and one email can trial up to two computers. When it ends, enter a license key to keep going. Your picks, ratings, and settings are untouched either way, because they live in your photo files and your own folders, not inside a trial.

What's next on the roadmap?

The `TASKS.md` file in the source repo is the authoritative list of planned features and known limitations. The short version as of this manual's writing:

- **Structured keyword panel**, hierarchical keywords with click-to-apply, more efficient than the current flat comma-separated list.
- **Per-app drag rules**, automatically send RAW to Photoshop / Lightroom and JPG everywhere else, without the Ctrl/Cmd modifier.
- **Shell-level drag source**, proper CFSTR_FILECONTENTS to fix browser uploads.

Priorities shift based on user feedback. If something on the list is important to your workflow, let us know, demand routes development attention.

Part VIII, Appendices

Appendix A. Supported file formats

This appendix is the authoritative list of file formats PhotoTaken indexes and works with. Anything not listed here is ignored, it won't show up as a tile, won't pair with anything, and won't count against the folder's image total.

Primary display formats

Files in these formats can be the **primary** (display) file of a contact-sheet tile. Each gets its own tile when it appears in a folder.

Extension	Format	Notes
<code>.jpg</code> , <code>.jpeg</code>	JPEG	Baseline and progressive both work. EXIF + IPTC + XMP metadata read/write supported.
<code>.tif</code> , <code>.tiff</code>	TIFF	Single-page. Multi-page TIFFs display the first page as the thumbnail. Full metadata support.
<code>.png</code>	PNG	Any variant. Metadata support via the PNG tEXt / iTXt chunks where ExifTool can reach.
<code>.heic</code> , <code>.heif</code>	HEIC / HEIF	Read-only. The format iPhones and many recent cameras shoot. Browse, view, tag, and convert. Always its own tile, even beside a same-name JPEG (iPhones often save both); a same-name RAW rides along on the HEIC tile. PhotoTaken never writes HEIC; use Export / Convert to make JPEG/PNG/TIFF/WebP copies, or have Ingest convert to JPG as the photos come in.
<code>.psd</code>	Adobe Photoshop	Read-only. Opens full-size as Pillow's flattened composite, with a fallback to the embedded preview for files Pillow can't decode directly (CMYK, 16-bit, etc.). A PSD saved without Photoshop's Maximize Compatibility option may have no preview at all, an empty tile, not a crash. Tags go to an <code>.xmp</code> sidecar; the PSD itself is never rewritten. No <code>.psb</code> , no editing or export, no per-layer rendering.

TIFF, PNG, HEIC/HEIF, and PSD are always their own tiles, even when a same-stem JPEG or RAW exists, they're treated as primary deliverables, never hidden as pair members. A same-stem RAW does ride along on a HEIC tile (the way it would on a JPEG). See Chapter 10.

RAW formats

RAW formats are **secondary**, they pair with a same-stem JPEG (when one exists) and ride invisibly on that tile, or stand alone as their own tile when there's no JPEG pair.

Extension	Brand	Typical bodies
.cr2	Canon	EOS 5D Mark III / IV, 6D, 7D, Rebel-series, older 1D-series
.cr3	Canon	EOS R5, R3, R5 Mark II, R6, R7, R8, M6 Mark II, newer 1D X Mark III
.crw	Canon	The pre-2004 container: EOS D30, D60, 10D, 300D, PowerShot Pro1
.nef	Nikon	Z9, Z8, Z7, Z6, Z5, D850, D780, D500, D7500, all recent bodies
.nrw	Nikon	The Coolpix / compact container: P-series, A-series
.arw	Sony	A1, A9 series, A7 series (I through V), A6000-A6700 series, RX series
.arq	Sony	Pixel-shift composites assembled by Sony's Imaging Edge software
.sr2 , .srf	Sony	The pre-Alpha era: DSC-R1, DSC-F828, DSC-V3
.dng	Adobe DNG	Leica M11 and many Leica bodies natively; Sigma fp; Pentax K-3 Mark III; any other RAW converted via Adobe DNG Converter
.orf	Olympus / OM System	OM-1, E-M1 Mark III / II / I, E-M5 Mark III, PEN F
.rw2	Panasonic / Lumix	S1 / S1R / S1H, S5 / S5 II, GH5 / GH6, G9, G100
.raf	Fujifilm	The whole X series (X-T, X-H, X-Pro, X100) and GFX medium format
.pef	Pentax / Ricoh	K-1, K-3, K-7, K-5, 645Z, and the rest of the K line
.srw	Samsung	NX1, NX500, NX300, and the rest of the NX line
.rw1	Leica	The Panasonic-built bodies: D-LUX, V-LUX, C-LUX
.x3f	Sigma	The Foveon bodies: DP Merrill, dp Quattro, SD1, SD Quattro
.3fr	Hasselblad	Straight off the back: X2D 100C, X2D II 100C, X1D / X1D II 50C, CFV 100C / CFV-50c backs, H6D / H5D / H4D / H3D
.fff	Hasselblad	The Phocus / Flexcolor container, written by the same backs

Extension	Brand	Typical bodies
<code>.iiq</code>	Phase One	XF and IQ backs, plus Leaf Credo
<code>.mos</code>	Leaf	Aptus and Aptus-II backs
<code>.mef</code>	Mamiya	ZD and the Mamiya-branded Leaf backs
<code>.mrw</code>	Minolta / Konica Minolta	DiIMAGE 7 / A1 / A2 / Z, Maxxum 5D and 7D
<code>.erf</code>	Epson	R-D1, R-D1s, R-D1x
<code>.dcr</code> , <code>.kdc</code>	Kodak	DCS-series professional backs and the DC compacts

Extension matching is case-insensitive. `.NEF` and `.nef` are the same format.

Every format in that table was tested against a real file from that camera before it shipped, not taken from a support list: it has to decode to actual pixels and read its EXIF cleanly, or it doesn't get added.

Two notes on the older and medium-format entries. Several of them (`.iiq` , `.mos` , `.kdc` , `.dcr` , `.erf` , `.sr2` , `.srf`) embed a preview far too small to fill a screen, so PhotoTaken ignores it and builds the image from the sensor data instead. That costs a fraction of a second per file and gives you a sharp view rather than a blown-up postage stamp. And Adobe DNG Converter refuses `.fff` , `.kdc` , `.mos` , and `.x3f` , so **Convert to DNG** reports Adobe's own error for those; browsing, viewing, tagging, and everything else work normally.

Video formats

Clips get their own tile, exactly like a photo, and are never hidden as a pair member. Browsing, renaming, Ingest, drag-and-drop, delete, Rotate Left/Right, star and color tags, and the Metadata Panel all work on video; see Video files for what does and doesn't apply, and Chapter 22 for clip rotation. Tags are written to an adjacent `.xmp` sidecar, never into the clip. Thumbnails are a poster frame decoded from the clip.

Extension	Format
.mp4 , .m4v	MPEG-4 Part 14
.mov , .qt	QuickTime
.avi	AVI
.mkv , .webm	Matroska / WebM
.mts , .m2ts , .ts	AVCHD / MPEG transport stream
.wmv	Windows Media
.mpg , .mpeg , .m2v	MPEG-1 / MPEG-2
.3gp , .3g2	Mobile
.mxf	Professional (broadcast)
.vob	DVD
.flv	Flash (legacy)

The photo-only actions (**Edit IPTC Info**, **Edit EXIF Info**, **Convert to DNG**) are greyed out when a clip is in the selection.

Formats not supported yet

PhotoTaken doesn't index these **yet**. Every one of them is on the list to add:

- **GoPro .gpr**. The decoder PhotoTaken uses won't open these yet. It's on the list and we're tracking the fix upstream.
- **Panasonic's older .raw**. The problem here isn't Panasonic, it's the extension: **.raw** is a generic name that half a dozen unrelated tools also use, so matching it would pull junk files onto your tiles. We want a safer way to tell them apart first.
- **WebP** as a folder file. WebP already works as an Export / Convert *output* format; browsing **.webp** files in a folder is what's still to come.
- **AVIF**.
- **BMP, GIF**, further down the list, since they rarely show up in a photographic workflow.

Tell us which format you shoot and we'll prioritize it: support@lormarsoft.com. Requests genuinely move things up the queue, Hasselblad **.3fr** got added because photographers asked for it, and the eighteen formats added right after it came from the same conversations.

Malformed files

If a file's extension is recognized but its bytes are malformed (truncated download, corrupt JPEG, partially-written RAW from an interrupted card write, etc.), PhotoTaken:

- Shows a placeholder tile in the grid (the dark-gray square) where the thumbnail couldn't decode.
- Sets the tooltip on the failing tile to include a brief error so you can see what went wrong on hover.
- Doesn't remove the file or hide it, it's still there in the folder, you just can't preview it.
- Metadata reads still work on the file if ExifTool can parse whatever EXIF / IPTC is readable.

The right fix for a malformed file is almost always to delete it (Delete key; Ctrl/Cmd+Z if you change your mind) and re-download / re-copy from the source. PhotoTaken doesn't attempt repair.

Appendix B. Files PhotoTaken writes to disk

PhotoTaken writes a handful of files as part of normal operation. This appendix explains what each one is, where it lives, and whether you can safely delete it.

Per-user files live in PhotoTaken's data folder. Paths below are shown in Windows form; the Mac equivalent of `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\` is `~/Library/Application Support/LorMarSoft/PhotoTaken/`, and everything inside it is identical on both platforms.

`settings.json` , app configuration

Location: - **Windows:** `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\settings.json` . To open that folder, press Win+R and paste `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken` . - **Mac:** `~/Library/Application Support/LorMarSoft/PhotoTaken/settings.json` . To open that folder, in Finder choose **Go > Go to Folder...** (⌘⇧G) and paste `~/Library/Application Support/LorMarSoft/PhotoTaken` .

Format: JSON. Human-readable. Holds every user-adjustable setting:

- Theme (dark / light).
- Favorites list.
- Open tabs and active tab.
- Folder tree expansion state and scroll position.
- Thumbnail size default and sort default.
- Display-field toggles.
- Slideshow interval.
- Recycle-Bin confirmation preference.
- Dock sides, widths, visibility (as base64-encoded Qt layout blobs).
- The drives and folders chosen in Find Photo Folders, and which of them have been scanned.
- Stationery Pads.
- Cache tunables (thumbnail cache size, folder snapshot LRU size).
- Update checker on/off and the check URL.
- Convert-to-DNG delete-originals preference.
- Ctrl/Cmd+drag RAW format preference.

Can I delete it? Yes, but PhotoTaken will revert to defaults on next launch, you'll lose favorites, pads, layout. If you want a fresh start, this is the file to remove. Keep a copy first if you might want to restore.

Can I edit it by hand? Yes. JSON is fair game, but be careful with the base64 layout blobs (they're Qt-internal). If the file is malformed, PhotoTaken falls back to defaults silently rather than crashing.

`_shootdesk_tags.json` , per-folder tag cache

Location: inside every folder that has been browsed in PhotoTaken with tag activity. The file sits at the top of the folder, e.g. `D:\Shoots\2026-04-14\_shootdesk_tags.json` .

Format: JSON. Maps each filename in the folder to its current color and rating.

Purpose: speed. Opening a folder with five thousand RAWs shows every tag badge in milliseconds because PhotoTaken reads this JSON instead of scanning XMP on every file. A background reader reconciles the JSON against the authoritative XMP in every file afterward.

Can I delete it? Yes. On next folder open, PhotoTaken rebuilds it from XMP. You'll see a brief delay (seconds to tens of seconds, depending on folder size) while the rebuild runs, and tags paint in as soon as the rebuild finishes.

Do I need to back it up? No. Back up your photos, this file regenerates from them.

Should I commit it to git? Generally no. Treat it as a build artifact: regenerable, folder-specific, changes frequently during tagging sessions. `.gitignore` it if the folder is tracked.

`<file>.xmp` , RAW sidecar files

Location: next to every RAW file that has been tagged, named as `<filename>.xmp` :

```
D:\Shoots\2026-04-14\IMG_0001.NEF
D:\Shoots\2026-04-14\IMG_0001.NEF.xmp ← sidecar
```

Format: XMP (XML metadata). Contains the rating, color label, and any IPTC fields you've set for the RAW. It's the **authoritative** storage for those fields, the JSON cache above is just a fast mirror.

Purpose: writing into RAW containers isn't safe. The RAW format is camera-vendor-specific, often poorly documented, and editing it risks corruption. The sidecar convention is what every professional photo tool uses (Lightroom, Photo Mechanic, Capture One, Bridge) for the same reason.

Can I delete it? Only if you also want to delete the tags. Without the sidecar, a RAW file has no rating or color label from PhotoTaken (and no way to get them back short of re-tagging).

When you move a RAW, move its sidecar too. PhotoTaken's rename and delete operations always move/delete the sidecar alongside its RAW. Manual moves in Windows Explorer need to grab both files.

.phototaken-pending-trash/ , delete staging directory

Location: inside folders where you've recently deleted files. Starts with a dot so it sorts out of the way; marked with the Windows hidden attribute so it's invisible unless "Show hidden files" is on in Explorer.

Purpose: instant **Ctrl/Cmd+Z** undo. Rather than going straight to the Recycle Bin (which would be a slower cross-drive copy on some configurations), PhotoTaken moves deleted files into this stage dir first, a fast same-disk rename. Ctrl/Cmd+Z pulls them back out.

What's inside: one subdirectory per staged batch (op), each containing the files that were deleted in that op plus a small `manifest.json` describing what's in the op.

When does it flush to the real Recycle Bin? On app quit, when the stage dir fills past a cap, when individual batches age past a retention limit (10 minutes by default), or when you open a folder that has leftover stage dirs from a prior session (those get flushed immediately).

Can I delete it? Yes, manually emptying the stage dir is the same as flushing it. You lose the Ctrl/Cmd+Z history for anything that was in there, but nothing bad happens otherwise.

Thumbnail disk cache

Location: under `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\thumb_cache\` (or similar, the exact path follows Qt's standard-locations convention).

Purpose: speeds up re-opening folders by avoiding re-decode of thumbnails. Keyed by `(path, mtime, size)` so a file edited outside PhotoTaken invalidates its cache entry automatically.

Can I delete it? Yes. The next time you open a folder, thumbnails re-decode from scratch. The only cost is time, no data is lost, because the cache is purely derivative.

Resilience. Each entry is written in full to a temporary file and then swapped into place, so an interrupted or overlapping write never leaves a half-written file behind. If an entry is ever found empty or unreadable, PhotoTaken treats it as missing, rebuilds it, and shows that work in the progress bar. PhotoTaken also coalesces duplicate decodes: if two background workers are asked for the same image at the same moment (for example because you left a folder and came back while a slow poster frame was still decoding), only one actually decodes it and the other reuses that result. This matters most for video poster frames, which are expensive to decode: a damaged or duplicated decode used to make a clip re-decode, sometimes more than once, on every visit.

folder_index.db , Find Photo Folders list

Location: in PhotoTaken's data folder, beside `settings.json` .

Format: a SQLite database. It holds the list behind **Find Photo Folders**: one row per folder that holds photos, with the drive it is on, its path on that drive, how many files it holds, and whether you removed it from the list. It records folders only. No photo, file name, or metadata is stored in it.

Can I delete it? Yes. PhotoTaken creates a fresh, empty one, and the next scan rebuilds the list. **Clear List...** in the Find Photo Folders window does the same thing without leaving the app. The drives you chose to scan are kept in `settings.json` , not here.

search_index.db , cross-folder search index

Location: `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\search_index.db` . Single SQLite file alongside `settings.json` .

Format: SQLite. Key tables: `files` (one row per image with its path, folder, filename, mtime, rating, label, raw siblings, plus EXIF columns like camera model, lens, ISO, aperture, shutter, focal length, date taken, GPS, and IPTC/XMP columns like caption, creator, copyright, credit, headline, and place city/state/country), `file_keywords` (one row per keyword per file), `files_fts` (a full-text index over the descriptive text fields, used for fast plain-word search when available), and `indexed_folders` (bookkeeping so **Everything** searches know which folders have been recorded).

Purpose: powers the toolbar Search box, including operators like `camera: , iso:>3200 ,` and `place: (` (see Chapter 16 → Searching across folders). The index is populated by the background XMP/EXIF reader: every time you browse a folder, or whenever a whole-library crawl runs (its right-click menu), its files and metadata get written into this DB, so any later search is fast.

Can I delete it? Yes. The next time you open any folder, PhotoTaken re-creates the file and starts populating it from scratch. You lose the **Everything** memory of folders you haven't revisited this session; browsing the folders again restores them.

Do I need to back it up? No. It's purely derivative from the files on disk, your photos and their metadata are the source of truth.

Can I edit it by hand? Don't. SQLite will tolerate external edits but PhotoTaken owns the schema and may rewrite any row during the next folder scan. Delete the DB if you want a clean reset instead.

Nothing else

PhotoTaken does not write:

- Crash dumps or logs (beyond what Windows itself collects).
- Telemetry of any kind.
- Network-uploaded anything.
- Temporary files during image decode, those happen in memory.
- Any file outside `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\` except the per-folder artifacts listed above.

If you see a file you don't recognize with a `phototaken` or `shootdesk` name, it's either listed here or it's not ours.

Appendix C. Performance tuning

PhotoTaken is tuned to feel instant at typical shoot sizes (a few hundred to a few thousand images per folder) on typical hardware (a mid-range laptop, SSD primary drive, external drive for library). Most users never need to change the defaults. This appendix covers what to tune if you do hit a wall.

Thumbnail cache size

Preferences → **Performance** → **Thumbnail cache (maximum entries)**, default 2000.

This is the in-memory LRU of decoded thumbnail pixmaps. At the default, a folder with a few thousand images fits entirely; tab switches feel instant because returning to a previously-loaded folder finds every thumbnail already decoded.

Raise it if:

- You work across many folders in a session and notice tab switches feel slower after the first handful.
- Your machine has 16 GB+ RAM and you want more snappy.

Lower it if:

- Your machine is memory-constrained (unlikely in 2026; most modern Windows laptops ship with 16 GB+).

Each entry is a decoded thumbnail pixmap at the current size. At 256 px × 256 px RGBA that's ~262 KB per entry. At the default 2000 entries, roughly 500 MB RAM is the cache's upper bound.

Folder snapshot cache size

Preferences → **Performance** → **Folder snapshot cache (maximum folders)**, default 8.

This is the LRU of per-folder **snapshot** records, scanned file list, pairing decisions, tag data, kept in memory so that switching tabs to a folder you've recently visited rehydrates the grid instantly (milliseconds) while a background revalidate scan reconciles any on-disk changes.

Raise it if:

- You rotate through 12+ folders in a session (editorial shoot with many sub-folders, for example).
- You want every tab switch in the typical workday to be instant.

Lower it if:

- You only ever work in one or two folders per session and want the memory back.

A snapshot is small (~few KB per file scanned), even a folder with 10,000 images is only a few MB of snapshot memory. You can safely bump this to 20-30 on any modern machine.

Viewer image cache size

The Viewer keeps a separate cache of decoded **full-size** images for back-scroll. It's smaller than the thumbnail cache because each entry is much larger (a 45 MP image at 8-bit RGBA is ~170 MB).

It's not exposed in Preferences, the default (about a dozen entries) is right for nearly every use. If you routinely back-scroll across more images than that, contact support with the scenario and we'll consider surfacing the tunable.

Large folders on network shares

A folder with 5,000 RAWs on a network share (NAS, mapped drive to a server) is the common case where performance falls off. The bottleneck is almost always network round-trip time rather than PhotoTaken itself:

- **First open:** must scan every file for metadata, then decode a thumbnail for each. Two network round-trips per file. Expect minutes on a 1 Gbit share; tens of minutes on a slower connection.
- **Re-open in the same session:** instant from cache, same as local.
- **Cross-session re-open:** slower than local because the on-disk thumbnail cache still has to hit the same paths for revalidation.

What helps:

- **Copy shoots locally during ingest.** The Ingest dialog's primary destination should point at a local SSD; use Backup destination for the NAS mirror. Work locally, cull locally, sync the delivery folder back later.

- **Bump the folder snapshot LRU.** Once a network folder is warm, a bigger snapshot LRU means it stays warm longer.
- **Keep the drive mapping alive.** A mapping that's been idle and has to re-authenticate delays every first-access.

Large folders on **local SSDs** are typically fine at defaults. If a local-drive folder feels slow, usually the answer is that the drive itself is slow (a USB 2.0 external, or a 5400 RPM spinner). Move the active shoot to a faster drive during work.

TIFF thumbnails

A folder of large TIFFs (Photoshop exports, scans, masters) used to be the slowest case in the app. A 100 MB pro TIFF on a USB external drive takes tens of seconds for a normal image library to read and decode in full just to make a thumbnail.

PhotoTaken short-circuits this with a fast path: for every TIFF, it first asks ExifTool to surface the embedded JPEG preview the file already carries (the camera preview, the Photoshop thumbnail, or the EXIF IFD1 thumb), and decodes that small JPEG instead of the full TIFF. Result: thumbnail time drops from tens of seconds to a fraction of a second per file, the same speed range as JPEGs.

If a TIFF has no embedded preview at all, the worker falls back to a full Pillow decode of the original, slower for that file, but still correct. Most camera-direct and Photoshop-saved TIFFs have a usable preview; hand-built or stripped-down TIFFs may not.

Ingest throughput

Typical numbers on common hardware, single-destination (no backup mirror):

- **SD card (UHS-II) → local NVMe SSD:** 250-350 MB/s, or roughly one 60 MB RAW every 200 ms. A 500-RAW shoot copies in about two minutes.
- **SD card (UHS-I) → local SSD:** 80-90 MB/s. Same shoot: ~6 minutes.
- **CFexpress → local NVMe:** 500+ MB/s. Same shoot: under a minute.

With a backup destination, throughput drops to roughly the slower of the two destinations (or the source, whichever is lowest). Two SSDs both fed from one card will bottleneck on the card reader.

Stationery Pad stamping during ingest adds a few hundred milliseconds per file for the ExifTool write. On a large shoot this adds up to a minute or two total; visible but not dominant.

Hardware recommendations

If you're buying a machine for PhotoTaken workflows:

- **NVMe SSD for the working drive**, period. Nothing else matters as much.
- **16 GB RAM minimum**; 32 GB if you routinely browse 10,000+ image folders.
- **CPU**. Any modern 4+ core CPU is plenty. RAW decode is the heaviest per-file operation and benefits from a decent single-core performance.
- **Display**. 1440p or 4K with accurate color if you plan to do culling decisions based on color. A calibrated display is worth the cost if you're delivering color-critical work; a good IPS panel is worth it even if you're not.

PhotoTaken does not benefit much from a discrete GPU, there's no GPU-accelerated rendering path in the app today. A laptop's integrated Intel / AMD graphics is fine.

Measuring performance

If you think PhotoTaken is slow somewhere specific, a simple test:

- **Open the same folder twice**. If the second open is fast (near-instant) and the first is slow, you've identified a cache-cold issue, disk speed is the bottleneck, not the app.
- **Compare local vs. network path**. If a folder that's slow on your NAS is fast when copied locally, the network is the bottleneck.
- **Watch the status bar**. Transient messages during operations report per-file progress, which gives you a pace to compare against expectations.

If a hot path (scroll, folder open, viewer open, ingest) feels genuinely slow on local storage with defaults, contact support@lormarsoft.com. Performance regressions are treated as bugs, not polish tasks, see the **Performance is the feature** section of the project's `CLAUDE.md`.

Appendix D. Support and contact

Support email

support@lormarsoft.com is the single channel for everything PhotoTaken-related: bug reports, feature requests, licensing questions, workflow questions, anything else. Reply time target is one business day.

Filing a good bug report

A useful bug report makes the reporter more important than the bug. Include:

- 1. App version.** Click the **PhotoTaken logo** in the toolbar; the **About** dialog shows the exact version string (e.g. `1.2.0`). Paste it verbatim.
- 2. OS version.** On Windows: Settings → System → About, include the edition (Pro / Home / etc.), version (e.g. `22H2`), and OS build. On Mac: → About This Mac, include the macOS version (e.g. `14.5`) and whether it's Apple Silicon.
- 3. Repro steps.** The minimum sequence of clicks / keystrokes to reproduce the issue, starting from "launch PhotoTaken." Ideally a second person could follow them and hit the same problem.
- 4. Expected vs. actual.** What you thought would happen vs. what did happen.
- 5. Screenshots.** Especially for: - Error dialogs (include the full text). - Visual glitches. - Anything that happens too fast to describe in words.
- 6. Relevant files.** If a specific image, folder, or shoot triggers the issue, sharing it helps enormously. If the content is client-confidential, a small reproduction folder of public-domain images that triggers the same bug works too.
- 7. settings.json** . If the issue might relate to layout, preferences, Stationery Pads, or favorites, attach `%APPDATA%\LorMarSoft\PhotoTaken\settings.json` . Review it first to ensure no sensitive info is in Stationery Pad text (rare but possible).

Feature requests

Same email. Include:

- **What workflow step** the feature helps with (ingest, cull, delivery, etc.).
- **What you currently do** as a workaround, if anything.
- **How often** the step comes up (every shoot vs. once a month vs. theoretical).

Frequency and workaround-pain are the two biggest factors in when a request gets attention.

"This costs me 15 minutes per shoot, I have six shoots a week, and there's no workaround" moves faster than "this would be nice to have someday."

Licensing

PhotoTaken is licensed, not subscription. Questions about license keys, seat counts, upgrade rights, or purchasing, same email.

Company

PhotoTaken is built and supported by:

LorMarSoft, LLC

All copyrights, trademarks, and support obligations live there.

What's not supported

- **Intel Macs.** The Mac build is Apple Silicon only (M1 and later), and needs macOS 12 Monterey or newer. There is no Intel build and no Rosetta build, so PhotoTaken will not run on a 2019 iMac, an Intel MacBook Pro, or any other Intel Mac. If you're on an Intel Mac, the Windows version is the option. (Not sure which you have? Apple menu > About This Mac: it says either "Chip: Apple M..." or "Processor: Intel...")
- **Linux.** PhotoTaken ships for macOS and Windows only. It may launch from source on Linux, but there's no packaged build and it isn't tested or supported. See Chapter 29 FAQ. (macOS and Windows are both fully supported.)
- **Unofficial builds.** If you're running something you didn't get directly from LorMarSoft, we can't help.
- **Third-party plugins / extensions.** PhotoTaken has no plugin model as of this writing. Anything that claims to be a PhotoTaken plugin isn't.

Appendix E. Glossary

Terms used throughout this manual, in alphabetical order.

Active tab. The folder tab that's currently showing in the contact sheet. Clicking a tab changes the active tab.

Background reader. The XMP reader that runs after a folder opens, reconciling the fast `_shootdesk_tags.json` cache against the authoritative XMP embedded in each file. If they differ, XMP wins and the cache updates.

Batch rename. Renaming many files at once with a template. See Chapter 21.

Cache invalidation. Dropping a cached value so the next request has to recompute it. PhotoTaken invalidates thumbnail and snapshot caches automatically when a file's path or mtime changes.

Camera-native RAW. A RAW file in the format the camera wrote, NEF from a Nikon, CR2/CR3 from a Canon, etc. Distinct from DNG, which is a post-capture conversion.

Color tag. A named color applied to an image as a metadata tag, stored in `xmp:Label`. PhotoTaken has a 17-color palette. Two images can share a color tag; each image has at most one.

Contact sheet. The central grid of thumbnails in PhotoTaken's main window. Shows every image in the active folder.

Cull, culling. The process of reviewing a shoot and deciding which images to keep, discard, or mark for delivery. The core workflow PhotoTaken is built to make fast.

DNG (Digital Negative). An open RAW format from Adobe. Backward-compatible with nearly every RAW-aware tool. See Chapter 24.

Dock. A side panel that can be moved, resized, hidden, or stacked. PhotoTaken has three: Folders, Tabs, Metadata.

EXIF. The metadata standard that cameras write into JPEG and TIFF files (and into the EXIF segment of RAW files). Covers capture data: date, camera, lens, ISO, shutter, aperture, GPS, etc.

Favorite. A root path (drive letter, folder, UNC share) that appears as a top-level entry in the Favorite Favorite Folders panel. Set via the Favorites dialog.

Folder snapshot. A cached record of a folder's scanned file list, pairing decisions, and tag data. Lets PhotoTaken rehydrate a tab instantly on revisit without re-scanning. See Appendix C.

Ingest. The copy step between memory card and library. Optionally includes a backup destination and a Stationery Pad stamp. See Chapter 11.

IPTC. The International Press Telecommunications Council metadata standard, focused on editorial / delivery fields: creator, copyright, credit, caption, keywords, location. See Chapter 19.

Layering (Stationery Pads). The behavior where applying a second pad only overwrites fields the second pad fills in, leaving untouched fields alone. Lets you stack a creator/copyright pad with a shoot-specific pad without losing either.

Lossless rotation. A rotation that only updates the EXIF Orientation tag, not the pixel data. No re-encoding, no quality loss. See Chapter 22.

LRU. Least Recently Used. The eviction policy PhotoTaken's caches use, oldest-unused entries get dropped first when the cache hits its size limit.

Multi-RAW tile. A contact-sheet tile that owns more than one RAW sibling. Typically happens after a NEF → DNG conversion with the Delete-originals checkbox off. See Chapter 10.

Pair, pairing. The rule that collapses a same-stem JPEG + RAW into a single contact-sheet tile. The JPEG is the display file; the RAW rides along.

Preview JPEG. The embedded JPEG preview a camera writes into a RAW file so non-RAW-aware tools can show the image. What PhotoTaken displays when showing a standalone RAW thumbnail.

Primary deliverable. A file that stands alone, not a derivative of something else. In PhotoTaken's pairing rules, JPEG, TIFF, and PNG are each primary deliverables (they get their own tiles); RAW is a pair member (it rides on a same-stem JPEG when one exists).

Recycle Bin / Trash. The operating system's trash, the Recycle Bin on Windows and the Trash on Mac. Local-drive deletes go here and can be restored via Ctrl/Cmd+Z (Cmd+Z) in PhotoTaken, or later through the Recycle Bin / Trash itself. Network-drive deletes behave differently per platform (see Chapter 23).

Rating. A 0-5 star value applied to an image, stored in `xmp:Rating`. Zero means unrated.

Revalidate scan. A background scan that runs after a folder snapshot is used to rehydrate a tab. It reconciles any on-disk changes (new files, renamed files, etc.) against the cached snapshot.

Sidecar. A secondary file next to a primary file, used to store metadata that can't safely be written into the primary. PhotoTaken writes `.xmp` sidecars for RAW files (see Chapter 12).

Snapshot cache. Short for folder snapshot cache. See above.

Stationery Pad. A named, reusable set of IPTC metadata fields. Applied to files in bulk with one click. See Chapter 20.

Stage dir. The hidden `.phototaken-pending-trash/` directory inside a folder where deleted files wait for Ctrl/Cmd+Z undo before getting flushed to the real Recycle Bin. See Chapter 23 and Appendix B.

Stem. The filename without extension. `IMG_0001` is the stem of both `IMG_0001.JPG` and `IMG_0001.NEF`. The pairing rule groups same-stem files into one tile.

Tab. A single open folder in the Tabs strip. Clicking a tab makes it the active tab.

Tags. Collective term for ratings and color tags applied via the keyboard shortcuts during cull. Stored in XMP.

Thumbnail cache. The in-memory LRU of decoded thumbnail pixmaps. Keeps the contact sheet responsive on re-opens. See Appendix C.

Tile. A single entry in the contact-sheet grid. Represents one shot (JPEG + its RAW sibling(s) together if they share a stem).

Viewer. The fullscreen single-image view opened via Enter or double-click. See Chapter 13.

XMP. The Extensible Metadata Platform, an Adobe-originated, now-ISO-standard metadata format. PhotoTaken writes `xmp:Rating` and `xmp:Label` for tags, plus the full IPTC field set for delivery metadata. Embedded in JPEG / TIFF / PNG; stored in a `.xmp` sidecar for RAW.

Appendix F. Known issues

Bugs we know about and haven't fixed yet, with workarounds where there are any. Anything not listed here, we want to hear about: support@lormarsoft.com. See [Filing a good bug report](#).

Two sidecar-backed files sharing a stem share one sidecar

What you see. A RAW file and a video clip with the same name, say `DSC_0001.NEF` and `DSC_0001.MOV`, always carry the same color label and star rating. Tag one and the other changes to match.

Why. Under the default **Standard** sidecar naming, the `.xmp` is named from the stem alone, so both files resolve to the same `DSC_0001.xmp` and share one set of tags. It applies to any two file types that use sidecars: RAW + video, RAW + PSD, PSD + video. See [Sidecar naming: Standard vs Photo Mechanic style](#).

What it does not affect. A JPEG (or HEIC) with a same-name RAW is *one tile* on purpose, and shares one set of tags by design; see Chapter 10. That is the normal shoot-RAW+JPEG case and it is working as intended. Folders of ordinary photos are unaffected.

Workaround. Set **Preferences > Files > RAW Sidecars > Naming** to **Photo Mechanic style**, which names them `DSC_0001.NEF.xmp` and `DSC_0001.MOV.xmp` so each keeps its own tags. The trade is real: **Lightroom does not read that form**. If your tags need to reach Lightroom, keep same-named clips and RAW files in separate folders instead. Switching naming does not migrate tags you have already written; they stay in the old sidecar.

Status. The fix is a change to how sidecars are named, which decides where existing tags live, so it needs a migration path rather than a quick patch. Tracked in `TASKS.md`.

End of PhotoTaken User Manual. Comments, corrections, and requests to support@lormarsoft.com.

Manual draft scaffolded for PhotoTaken by LorMarSoft, LLC. Bug reports and suggestions welcome at support@lormarsoft.com.