Tethered shooting with the Canon EOS Utility

A guide to tethered shooting using the Canon EOS Utility

The following pages were originally included before Lightroom gained the ability to shoot in tethered mode. I have kept these pages available in order to show an alternative approach to shooting tethered in Lightroom, one that can be adapted perhaps for working with other types of camera import programs.

Tethered shooting with the Canon EOS Utility

Figure 1 *This shows the computer setup that I normally use when shooting in tethered mode in the studio using the Canon EOS 1Ds Mk III camera.*

Prior to Lightroom 3 there was no official support for tethered shooting in Lightroom. But if you can connect your camera directly to the computer and import photos to a folder, you can configure Lightroom to work in tethered mode. Photographs can be quickly brought into Lightroom, bypassing the need to import from a camera card. However, to do this Lightroom needs to rely on the use of camera manufacturer-supplied software that can communicate with the camera and download captured files to a specified folder location. Once such software is running, you can configure Lightroom to automatically import the photos directly into the catalog (**Figure 1**).

Connecting the camera to the computer

To shoot in tethered mode you need the ability to connect your camera to the computer. Ideally, you want the fastest connection possible. Most existing professional digital SLRs offer a FireWire (IEEE 1394) connection (although many cameras are now moving toward USB 2.0), which in practice allows you to shoot and download at about the same speed as you can with a fast camera memory card and in some cases quicker. The only downside is that you must have your camera connected to the computer via a FireWire or USB 2.0 cable, and this can restrict the amount of freedom you have to move about without pulling the cable out, or worse still,pulling a laptop computer off the table! Another option is to shoot

wirelessly. At the time of this writing, wireless units are available for some digital SLR cameras that will allow you to transmit images directly from the camera to a base station linked to the computer. Wireless shooting offers you the freedom, up to a certain distance, to move about without the restrictions of a tethered cable. But the current data transmission speeds with some cameras are a lot slower than those you can expect from a FireWire or USB 2.0 connection. Rapid shooting via a wireless connection can work well if you are shooting in JPEG mode, but not if you intend on shooting raw files only. But of course, that may change in the future. With Nikon equipment, you can shoot wirelessly via PTP/IP or FTP. It appears so far that PTP/IP is better and should rival FireWire, since PTP/IP is able to transfer files much faster due to the compression built into the transmission.
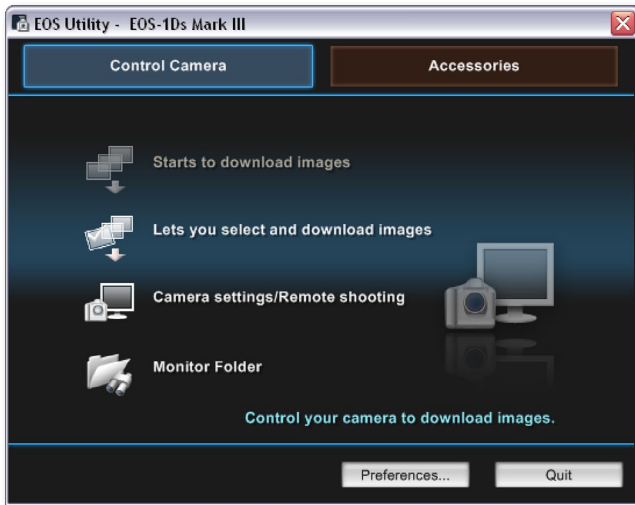
Camera capture software

Lightroom is able to appropriate the tethered shooting component of the camera communication software, and from there directly take over the image processing and image management. Here's how it works: The camera communication software can be configured to download the files to a specific folder location. When the files appear in this "watched" folder, Lightroom can be configured to immediately copy the files into the Lightroom library. And because the files are simultaneously deleted from the watched folder, you effectively bypass the camera software and the images appear directly in Lightroom.

It is possible to use Lightroom in conjunction with the various Canon capture software programs designed for the Canon EOS range of cameras, and over the next few pages I have outlined the steps needed to set up a Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III to auto-import files directly into Lightroom via the Canon EOS Utility program. Nikon users will find that Nikon Capture includes a Camera Control component that works the same way as the Canon software and establishes a watched folder to download the images to. The latest version of Nikon Capture supports all the D Series cameras as well as the Nikon Coolpix 8700. Alternatively, you might want to consider buying Bibble Pro software from Bibble Labs (www.bibblelabs.com). Bibble Pro (version 5.2.3 at this writing) enables tethered shooting with a wide variety of digital cameras, and again allows you to establish a watched folder for the downloaded images. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to test these other programs. Whichever program you use, you should be able to adapt the following steps to auto-import tether-captured images into Lightroom.
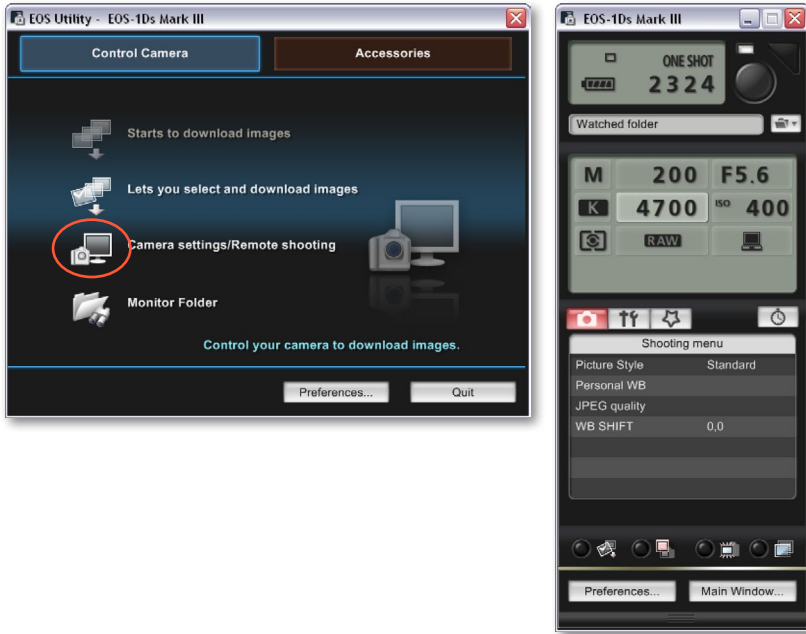
> **NOTE**
>
> **The Canon EOS Utility described on these pages is software that comes with the Canon EOS cameras and can also be downloaded free of charge from the Canon cameras Web site:** www.canon.com **(look for the download library section on the site).**

1. To initiate a tethered shoot session you need to have the camera tethered to the computer and switched on. Next, launch the camera-supplied software, which in the example shown here is the Canon EOS Utility program. Here you can see the welcome screen, and I began by clicking the Preferences button so that I could configure the EOS Utility settings to get everything ready for tethered shooting.
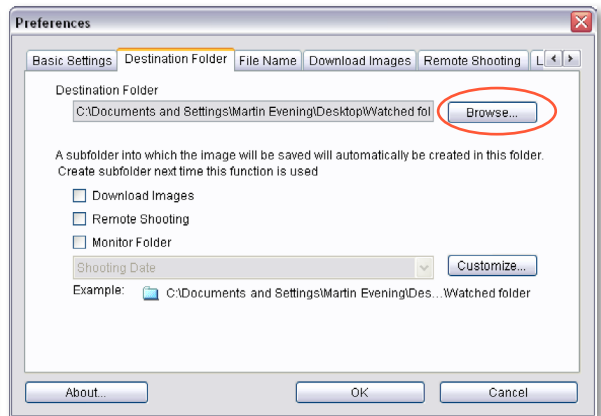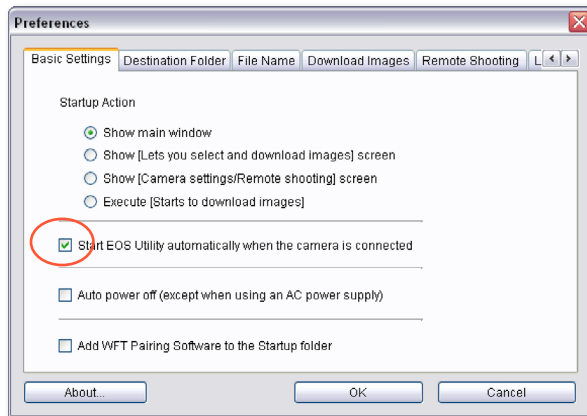
2. The preferences will vary with different tethered software programs. In this example I chose to make EOS Utility the default program that launched whenever the camera was connected to the computer. In the Destination Folder section I clicked the Browse… button to select a destination folder for the downloaded images to go to. This was a new empty folder that I had added to the Desktop that was simply called "Watched Folder." I clicked the OK button to close the Preferences dialog window and this took me back to the EOS Utility welcome screen.

3. In the welcome screen window I clicked the Camera settings/Remote shooting button, which launched the EOS Capture window shown here. This lets you control the camera remotely. You can use this window to adjust the main camera settings such as the lens aperture, shutter speed, and ISO setting. Notice at the top of the window is the watched folder name you set in the preferences. Click the folder icon next to it to open the Destination Folder preferences shown in Step 2. You can click the large camera control button in the EOS Capture window to take photographs remotely. Or, you can use the camera body shutter release as you would do normally.
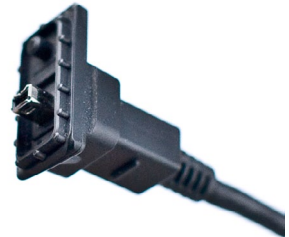

Figure 2 *The adaptor shown in this photograph can be glued to the end of a tethered shoot cable and help prevent it from dropping out from the camera body.*
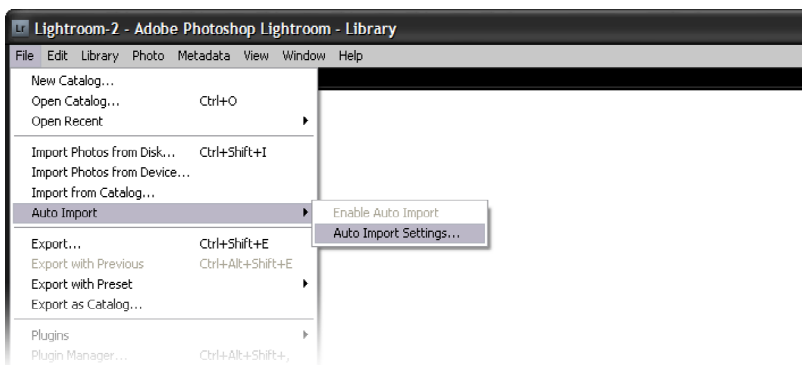
4. You now need to go to Lightroom to complete the tethered link setup between Lightroom and the camera software. In the Lightroom File menu select Auto Import ⇨ Auto Import Settings.

5. The Auto Import Settings dialog can be used to configure the import settings for the automatically imported files. These will be applied to all the images that are about to be captured and for the duration of the shoot. Click the Choose button and select the same watched folder as you selected in Step 2. Then go to the Destination section, choose a destination folder location, and enter a Subfolder Name for the current shoot. In this example I selected a custom File Naming template and entered a short shoot description in the Custom Text field. I also selected a custom Metadata template and custom Develop Settings template. I then added some custom Keywords to apply to the files as they were imported.
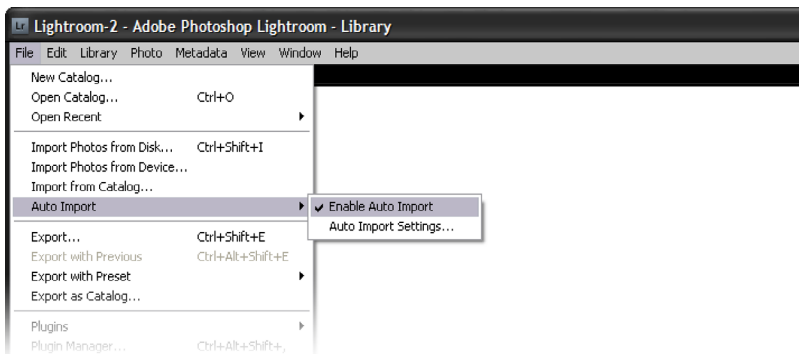
6. After you have done that, go to the Auto Import menu again and highlight the Enable Auto Import menu item to switch it on.
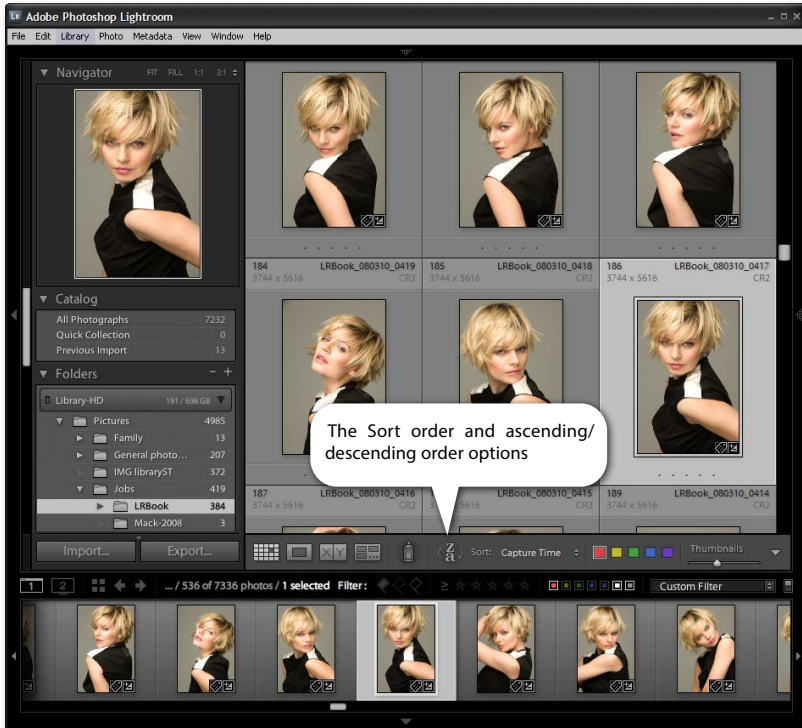
The Sort order and ascending/descending order options

7. We are now ready to shoot tethered. Here is how it works: as you start shooting, the EOS Utility imports the camera files directly to the watched folder you selected in Step 2. From there, Lightroom recognizes that a new image has been added to the watched folder and automatically imports these captures to the Lightroom catalog folder that was specified in Step 5, using the preconfigured Auto Import settings. Basically, once you have configured a tethered shoot setup at the beginning of a shoot, you can leave all the settings as they are and continue taking pictures all day. However, there might be times where you'll need to edit the Keywords for a particular shot or apply a different default develop setting.

Speedier tethered shooting

From the early testing that I did with Lightroom 1.0, I discovered that the Canon software happened to work about 4–5 times faster running on Windows XP than it did using Mac OS X 10.5 (using the exact same Intel chip computer). This situation has changed since then and from the most recent testing I have done it appears that the Macintosh platform is now just as fast as Windows XP when running the Canon EOS Utility software in conjunction with Lightroom 3. Plus I also discovered that the Lightroom direct tethered mode shooting speed is actually slightly faster. You may wish to carry out your own speed evaluations to check if this is the case as the operating systems and various tethered capture programs are updated