Wildlife Tagger

AI species identification and quality rating
for Adobe Lightroom Classic

User Guide · Version 1.2.0 · Windows and macOS

What it does

- Looks at the photos in the folder you have open in Lightroom and works out what species is in each one: birds, insects, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, plants and fungi.
- Adds the species as keywords, in your language, with the scientific name as a synonym.
- Uses where the photo was taken to favour species that actually live there.
- Can give each photo a star rating based on how sharp the subject is, plus exposure and noise.
- Free and offline by default, with an optional, more accurate cloud AI.

Latest version: www.distinctlyaverage.co.uk

Free software under the GNU General Public License v2 or later.

Contents

1. Before you start . . . 3
2. Installation . . . 3
3. Identifying your photos . . . 4
4. Understanding the results . . . 5
5. Settings . . . 7
6. Using the cloud AI (optional) . . . 9
7. Tips for best results . . . 9
8. Updating and uninstalling . . . 10
9. Troubleshooting . . . 11
10. Licence and credits . . . 11

1. Before you start

You need:

	Requirement
Lightroom	Adobe **Lightroom Classic** (version 6 or later). The cloud-based "Lightroom" app (without "Classic") does not support plugins like this.
Computer	Windows 10/11 or macOS. At least 8 GB of memory; 16 GB or more is recommended.
Python	Python **3.12** (3.10–3.13 also work). It is free and is used by the AI helper. See section 2.
Disk space	About 6–8 GB for the AI libraries and model (more with NVIDIA GPU support).
Internet	Needed for installation, and once per area to download its local species list. After that, the free AI works offline.
Graphics card	Optional but much faster: an NVIDIA card on Windows, or any Apple Silicon Mac (M1 or later).

Cloud AI is optional
Everything works without the cloud AI. You only need an Anthropic account and API key if you want to use it (see section 6).

2. Installation

Download the latest release (a .zip file) from www.distinctlyaverage.co.uk and unzip it, for example to your Downloads folder. It contains a **WildlifeTagger.lrplugin** folder, an **install** folder and this guide.

Windows

1. Install Python 3.12 from **python.org/downloads/windows**. In the installer, tick **"Add python.exe to PATH"** and leave the **"py launcher"** option ticked.
2. **Close Lightroom Classic.**
3. Open the unzipped folder, go into **install** and double-click **install_windows.bat**. If Windows SmartScreen warns you, click **More info** and then **Run anyway**.
4. Wait while it installs. The first time this downloads several GB, so it can take 10–30 minutes. If you have an NVIDIA graphics card, it also installs GPU support (about 3 GB more).
5. When it says **Done**, press a key to close the window and start Lightroom Classic.

NVIDIA graphics cards
If the installer says it could not enable the GPU, update your graphics driver from nvidia.com/drivers and run the installer again. Newer cards such as the RTX 50 series need a recent driver. The plugin still works without the GPU, just more slowly.

macOS

1. Install Python 3.12 from **python.org/downloads/macos**. Use the official installer; the Python that comes with Apple's developer tools is too old.
2. **Quit Lightroom Classic.**
3. Open the unzipped folder, go into **install** and double-click **install_mac.command**. If macOS says it cannot be opened, right-click (or Control-click) the file, choose **Open**, then **Open** again.

4. Wait while it installs and downloads the AI model (several GB, 10–30 minutes the first time).
5. When it says **Done**, close the Terminal window and start Lightroom Classic.

Check that it works

1. In Lightroom, choose **File > Plug-in Manager**.
2. Select **Wildlife Tagger** in the list on the left. It should say *Installed and running*.
3. Scroll to **Scope and Helper** and click **Test AI Helper**. After a short wait you should see the version, where the AI runs (*GPU*, *Apple GPU* or *cpu*) and how long a test photo took.

> **What the test result means**
> On a computer with a supported graphics card, the test photo should take well under a second. If it says *Runs on: cpu* although you have an NVIDIA card, GPU support isn't installed; see Troubleshooting (section 9).

3. Identifying your photos

1. In the **Library** module, click a folder in the **Folders** panel on the left. Only the photos in this folder are analysed; subfolders are optional (see section 5). Collections are not used: it must be a folder.
2. Choose **Library > Plug-in Extras > Identify Wildlife in Current Folder**. The same command is also under **File > Plug-in Extras**.
3. A message shows how many photos will be analysed, which AI engine is used and whether star ratings will be set. Click **Start**.
4. A progress bar appears at the top left of the Lightroom window. The first run in a new area first downloads that area's species list (up to a few minutes). You can keep working, or click the **X** next to the progress bar to cancel; photos already done keep their results.
5. When it has finished, a summary shows how many photos were identified, which species were found and any problems.



The progress bar at the top left of Lightroom. Click the X to cancel.



Example summary after analysing a folder of 47 dragonfly, hornet and bird photos

How long it takes

Setup	Typical time per photo
NVIDIA GPU (Windows)	Well under 1 second
Apple Silicon Mac	About 0.5–1 second
Processor only (no supported GPU)	About 1–3 seconds
Cloud AI	About 3–10 seconds, depending on your connection

Lightroom first has to create a preview of each photo, so very large raw files add a little time. By default, photos that have already been analysed are skipped, so running it again on a folder only processes new photos.

> **Location matters**
> The plugin works out the area from the photo's **GPS position**. If there is none, it uses the **Country** field in the photo's IPTC metadata, and otherwise the **Default country** from the settings. Set a default country (for example *United Kingdom* or *GB*) if most of your photos have no GPS data; it noticeably improves the results.

4. Understanding the results

Keywords

Each identified photo gets a keyword nested under class, order and family, for example:

```
Wildlife › Aves › Accipitriformes › Accipitridae › Red Kite
```

The scientific name (*Milvus milvus*) is added as a synonym, so it is found by searches and included when you export. The common name is in your language, using the local name where it differs (for example British versus American English).

When the AI isn't sure

The plugin only names a species when it is confident enough (55% by default). Otherwise it steps back to a level it *is* sure of:

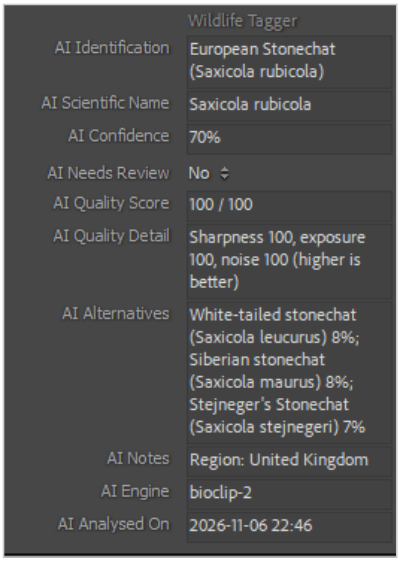
Result	Keyword example	Meaning
Species	… › Accipitridae › Red Kite	Confident identification
Genus	… › Accipitridae › Milvus sp.	A kite, but which one is uncertain
Family / order / class	… › Accipitriformes › Accipitridae	Only the wider group is certain
Not identified	(no species keyword)	No recognisable subject, or too uncertain

Anything below species level also gets the keyword **Wildlife › Needs review**, so you can find those photos quickly in the Keyword List and check them yourself.

Wildlife Tagger fields in the Metadata panel

In the **Metadata** panel on the right of the Library module, choose **Wildlife Tagger** from the drop-down menu at the top of the panel to see:

Field	Contents
AI Identification	Common and scientific name, or the rank reached (e.g. *Milvus (genus)*)
AI Scientific Name	The scientific name on its own
AI Confidence	How sure the AI was, as a percentage
AI Needs Review	Yes / No
AI Alternatives	The next most likely species, and the best guess when only a genus or family was tagged
AI Notes	Region used, any warnings and, with the cloud AI, sex/age and behaviour
AI Quality Score	0–100, plus sharpness, exposure and noise details
AI Engine, AI Analysed On	Which AI was used, and when



The Wildlife Tagger fields for a photo of a European Stonechat

> **Tip: smart collections**
> These fields can be used in the Library Filter bar and in smart collections, for example "all photos where AI Needs Review is Yes" or "AI Identification contains Kite".

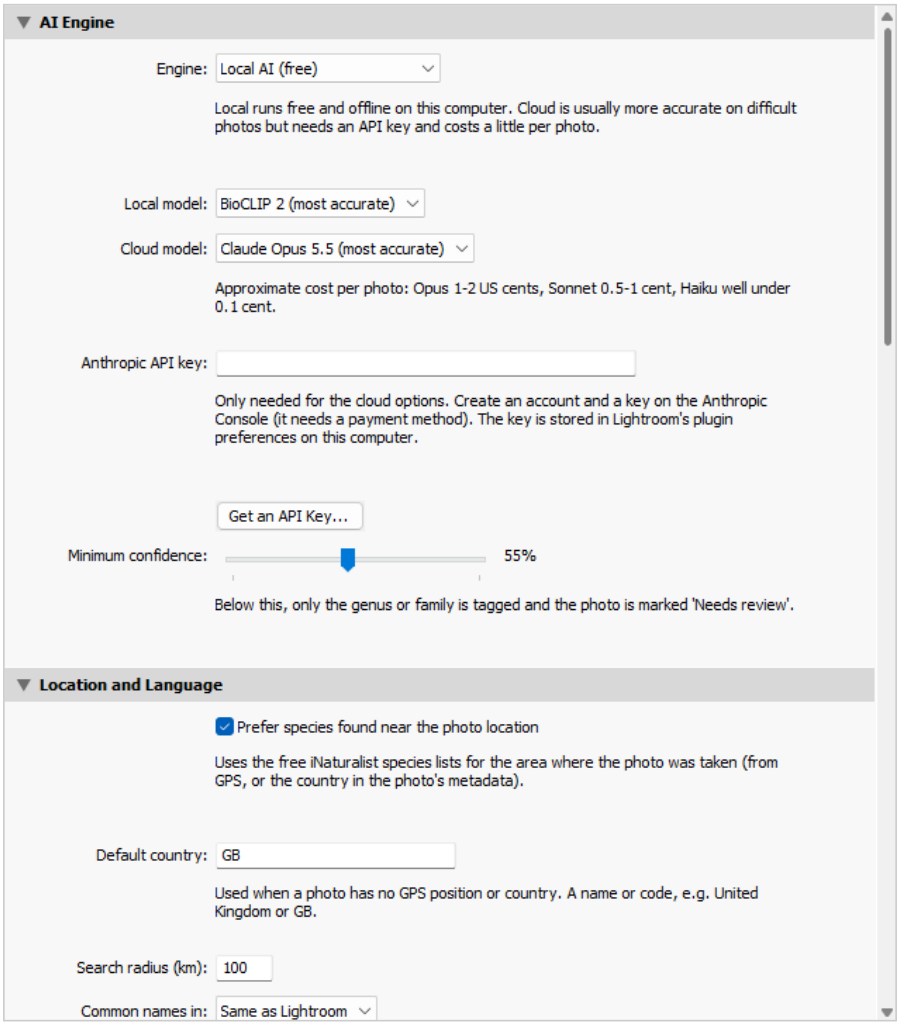
Star ratings

If you turn on star ratings (section 5), each photo gets 1 to 5 stars from its quality score. The score is mostly about **how sharp the subject is**: the sharpest part of the frame is taken as the subject, so a crisp bird against a soft background scores well. Exposure and noise count for less. **Ratings you have already set are not changed** unless you allow it.

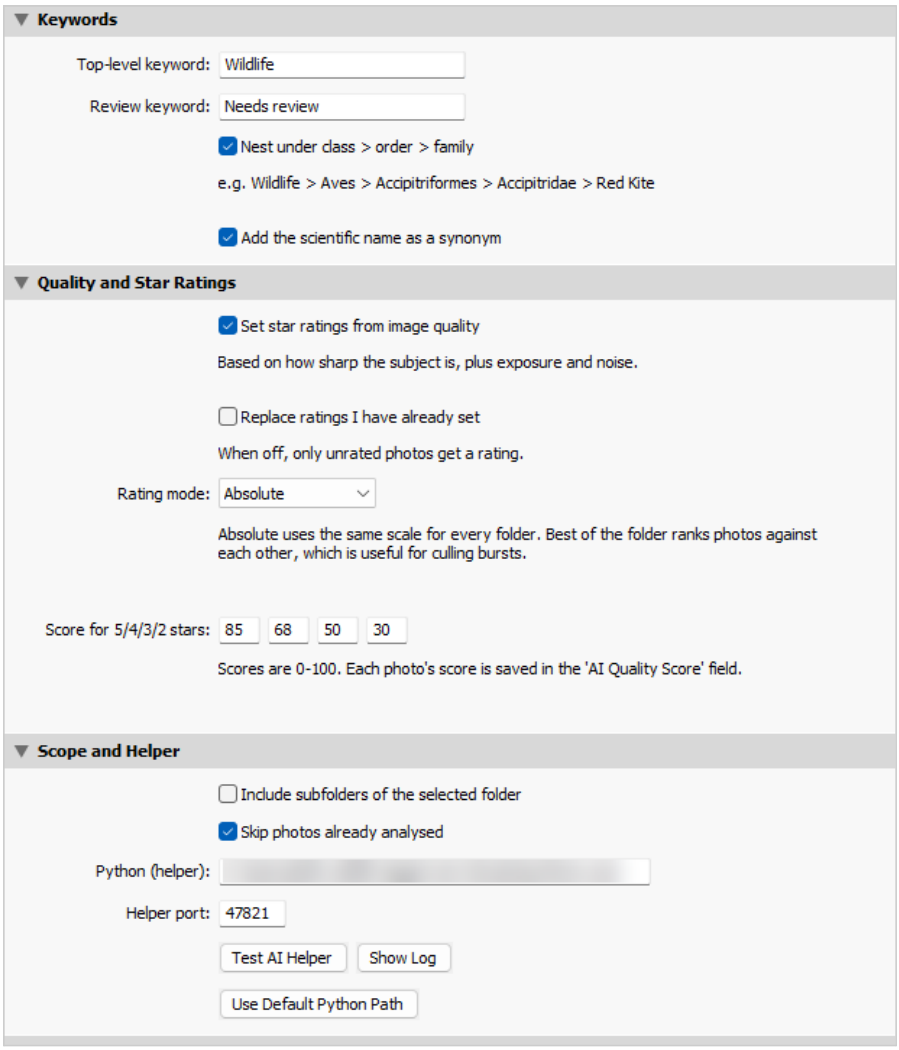
Rating mode	How it works	Best for
Absolute	The same scale everywhere: 85+ = 5 stars, 68+ = 4, 50+ = 3, 30+ = 2, below that = 1. You can change these thresholds.	Comparing photos across folders
Best of the folder	Photos are ranked against each other: the top 10% get 5 stars, the next 20% get 4, and so on. A photo never gets more than one star above its absolute score, so a folder of blurry shots doesn't get 5 stars.	Culling bursts and picking the sharpest frames

5. Settings

All settings are in **File > Plug-in Manager > Wildlife Tagger**. Changes take effect the next time you run it.



Settings: AI Engine, and Location and Language



Settings: Keywords, Quality and Star Ratings, and Scope and Helper

Setting	Default	What it does
Engine	Local AI	**Local AI (free)**: runs on your computer, offline. **Local AI, cloud when unsure**: only uncertain photos go to the cloud, which keeps costs low. **Cloud AI**: every photo goes to the cloud.
Local model	BioCLIP 2	BioCLIP 2 is more accurate; BioCLIP is smaller and faster on older computers.
Cloud model	Claude Opus 5.5	Opus is the most accurate (about 1–2 US cents per photo); Sonnet is balanced; Haiku is cheapest.
Anthropic API key	(empty)	Only for the cloud options; see section 6.
Minimum confidence	55%	Below this, only the genus or family is tagged and the photo is marked *Needs review*. Raise it for fewer but surer species tags; lower it for more species tags with more mistakes.
Prefer species found near the photo location	On	Uses iNaturalist's free records to favour species found in the area.
Default country	(empty)	Used when a photo has no GPS or country. A name or code: *United Kingdom*, *GB*, *France*, *US*…
Search radius (km)	100	How far around a GPS position to look for recorded species.
Common names in	Same as Lightroom	Language for the keyword names.

Setting	Default	What it does
Top-level keyword	Wildlife	The parent keyword everything is placed under.
Review keyword	Needs review	Added to uncertain photos. Leave it empty to turn it off.
Nest under class › order › family	On	Off gives a flat list: Wildlife › Red Kite.
Add the scientific name as a synonym	On	
Set star ratings from image quality	Off	Turns star ratings on.
Replace ratings I have already set	Off	When off, only unrated photos get a rating.
Rating mode / score thresholds	Absolute; 85/68/50/30	See section 4.
Include subfolders	Off	Also analyse the folders inside the selected folder.
Skip photos already analysed	On	Turn off to analyse a folder again, for example after changing settings. Old Wildlife Tagger keywords are replaced, not duplicated.
Python (helper), Helper port	(automatic)	Normally left alone. **Use Default Python Path** resets the Python location.

6. Using the cloud AI (optional)

The cloud option uses Anthropic's Claude AI. It is usually better on difficult photos, such as females and juveniles, similar-looking species, and small or partly hidden subjects. It also notes sex/age and behaviour where visible. It needs an account and is paid per photo.

1. In the plugin settings, click **Get an API Key...**, or go to **console.anthropic.com/settings/keys**.
2. Create an account, add a payment method and buy some credit. A few pounds or dollars is enough for hundreds of photos with Opus, or thousands with Haiku.
3. Click **Create Key**, give it a name such as *Lightroom*, and copy the key (it starts with *sk-ant-*).
4. Paste it into **Anthropic API key** in the plugin settings.
5. Set **Engine** to **Local AI, cloud when unsure** (recommended) or **Cloud AI**.

> **Keep your key private**
> Anyone with your key can spend your credit. Don't share screenshots that show it. If a key leaks, delete it in the Anthropic Console and create a new one. You can also set a monthly spending limit in the Console.

Privacy

- **Local AI:** your photos never leave your computer. The only thing sent over the internet is a request for the species list of an area, using a location rounded to roughly 50 km.
- **Cloud AI:** a reduced copy of each photo (1600 pixels on the long side, with your edits) is sent to Anthropic, together with its location and date.

7. Tips for best results

- **Crop first.** The plugin analyses the photo as you have edited it, so a tight crop on a distant subject helps the AI a lot.
- **Add a location.** GPS data, a country in the metadata or a default country all clearly improve identification.
- **Check the "Needs review" photos.** The AI Alternatives field often contains the right answer.
- **Use "Best of the folder" for bursts.** It quickly shows which frames are sharpest.
- **Fix mistakes normally.** Edit the keywords as usual; the plugin won't change them again unless you re-analyse with "Skip photos already analysed" turned off.

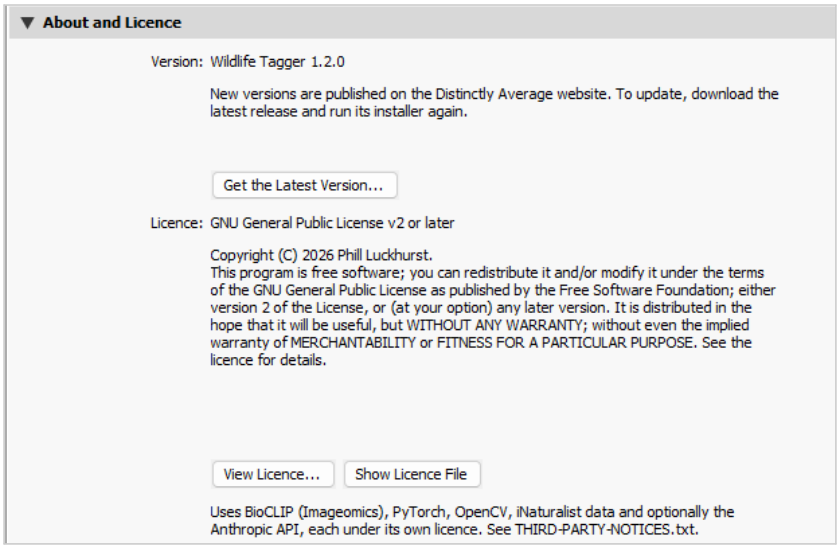
Limitations

- The AI is very good on clear photos of common birds and mammals, but less reliable on small insects, juveniles and look-alike species. Always treat its answers as suggestions.
- Only the main subject is identified. With several species in one photo, normally only the most prominent one is tagged.
- The quality score measures technical sharpness, not composition. A sharp twig in front of a soft bird can be mistaken for the subject.
- The free AI's common names are looked up online once and then remembered; while offline, English names may be used.

8. Updating and uninstalling

Updating

The installed version is shown in **About and Licence** at the bottom of the plugin settings. Click **Get the Latest Version...** to open www.distinctlyaverage.co.uk.



About and Licence, at the bottom of the plugin settings

1. Download and unzip the new release.
2. Close Lightroom Classic.
3. Run the installer again (**install_windows.bat** or **install_mac.command**). It is much quicker the second time, and your settings and the downloaded AI model are kept.

Uninstalling

1. In **File > Plug-in Manager**, select Wildlife Tagger and click **Remove**, or delete the plugin folder:
   Windows: `%APPDATA%\Adobe\Lightroom\Modules\WildlifeTagger.lrplugin`
   Mac: `~/Library/Application Support/Adobe/Lightroom/Modules/WildlifeTagger.lrplugin`
2. Delete the helper folder `.wildlife-tagger` in your user folder (`C:\Users\<you>` or your Mac home folder).
3. To free the space used by the AI model, also delete `.cache\huggingface` in your user folder (only if no other software uses it).

Your keywords and star ratings stay in your catalog after uninstalling.

9. Troubleshooting

Start with **Test AI Helper** in the plugin settings: it shows most problems straight away. Use **Show Log** to open the log file, which records every step and how long it took.

Problem	What to do
"Python for the AI helper was not found"	Run the installer again. If Python is installed somewhere unusual, click **Use Default Python Path** after installing.
"No folder selected"	Click a folder in the **Folders** panel. Collections, "All Photographs" and "Previous Import" are not used.
Very slow, and Test AI Helper says Runs on: cpu on a PC with an NVIDIA card	Close Lightroom, update the NVIDIA driver and run the installer again. It installs GPU support automatically.
"The AI helper stopped responding"	Click **Test AI Helper**. If that fails, use **Library > Plug-in Extras > Stop AI Helper**, restart Lightroom and try again. If it still fails, send the log file (see below).
"Regional species list not available"	iNaturalist could not be reached or was slow. Photos are still identified, just without the location boost. It retries next time.
Names are in English instead of my language	The name lookup needs the internet the first time. Some species have no common name in every language.
Photos are not re-analysed	Turn off **Skip photos already analysed**.
"Cloud AI failed"	Check the API key, and that your Anthropic account has credit.
The plugin shows "Installed but not working"	Remove it in the Plug-in Manager and run the installer again.

Log file locations

Windows: `C:\Users\<you>\.wildlife-tagger\helper.log`
Mac: `~/.wildlife-tagger/helper.log` (in Finder, press Cmd+Shift+. to show hidden folders)

When asking for help, please include the log file and what **Test AI Helper** shows. Help and updates: www.distinctlyaverage.co.uk.

10. Licence and credits

Wildlife Tagger is Copyright © 2026 Phill Luckhurst.

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full licence is in **LICENSE.txt**, and also at gnu.org/licenses/old-licenses/gpl-2.0.html.

The plugin uses the following components, each under its own licence (see THIRD-PARTY-NOTICES.txt):

- **BioCLIP / BioCLIP 2** by the Imageomics Institute: the free species-identification models.
- **iNaturalist**: regional species records and common names, contributed by its community of naturalists.
- **PyTorch**, **OpenCV**, **NumPy** and **Pillow**: AI and image processing.
- **Claude** by Anthropic: optional cloud identification, using your own API key.

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