

Creating Photo Keepsakes of Your Catch

by Linda Steiner

Not long ago, photos of anglers and their catch were either good or bad, depending on the skill of the photographer, the cooperation of the subject and luck. Nothing could be done about a poor photo after the shutter was snapped.

Nowadays, successful anglers who want to preserve a special moment and catch can get a second-chance to have a good photo by using digital cameras and photo editing software.

Few digital photos can stand alone without a little computer tweaking in a photo processing program. Before working on any digital photo, though, save the image under a different name. Work on the copy and preserve the original. This way, you can go back and start over.

If the angler and the fish look too small or there are parts of the photo you don't want, crop the photo. The crop tool allows you to outline what you want—the subject angler and the catch—and cut away what you don't—other anglers and the shoreline sign. If the photo looks a little dark, lighten it with the brightness tool. If the image is too light, then darken it.

Does the photo look dull? Try increasing the contrast to make the shadows darker and the highlights lighter. Pump up the color by increasing color saturation, but not so much that flesh tones and known colors appear unnatural.

If you missed the right focus, fool the eye of the viewer by, again, increasing the contrast. Not yet satisfied? Try sharpening the photo, using the sharpen tool or a filter (in Adobe Photoshop, unsharp mask is recommended).

If a telephone pole or another angler's rod looks like it's emerging from the subject angler's head, remove it by cloning some of the background. If the camera sensor is dirty and specks appear on solid backgrounds, use the clone tool to remove these specks, too. Splotches such as fish blood can be removed similarly or with more gentle tools such as the healing brush, or whatever your program calls its capacity to blend and overlay.

In many fishing photos, the sky appears a blank, too-light gray. Select the sky with the appropriate select tool and darken it slightly. Paint a light blue tone into the selected sky area, starting with perhaps 10 percent transparency. Stop before the sky looks fake.

Play with the drama of black and white by removing the color in the photo (desaturate or grayscale mode) or desaturate so the image looks black and white, but remains a color photo. Then, add red and yellow until you have a pleasing sepia-tone.

You can make the photo an attractive vignette by drawing a box, circle or ellipse around the angler and fish and using your program's tool to feather the edge. This creates a soft outline or halo. If the photo processing program has a text tool, you can write on top of the photo, perhaps the angler's name, the fish's weight and length, the location and the date.

Now that you have a photo keepsake of the catch, what do you do with it? Most obvious is to print it, as a remembrance or gift. Photo-quality color inkjet printers start at less than \$100. Always use photo grade inks and the printer's setting that gives the finest detail (high dpi or dots per inch).

Arts-and-crafts uses for photos can be found online, provided by camera and printer manufacturers as well as greeting card and stationery companies. A visit to a larger office, craft or photographic supply store can suggest lots of ideas and resources. Double-sided, heavy-weight inkjet paper or blank postcards can be printed on both sides and folded to create holiday greeting cards featuring the happy angler. Fishing photos can be the basis for personalized, computer-generated calendars.

Add fishing photos to scrapbook projects, both the cut and paste type and those created by computer scrapbooking programs. Inexpensive programs also let you use photos in journals and diaries. With these programs, you can also make fake magazine covers, newspaper front pages and trading cards. Create personalized letterhead by adding a fishing photo to stationery-quality inkjet paper with matching envelopes. Make your own business or calling cards that show you and your prize catch. Images can also be printed as posters or on computer mouse pads, cups, T-shirts and more. Angling keepsake digital photos can be easily shown as slide shows on a computer, television or in digital photo frames. Even better, make your computer desktop your favorite angling photo. ☐



1 The author's nephew, Christian, and one of the young angler's first catches—a pumpkinseed sunfish. The photo is too dark and dull. The digital camera correctly exposed the pond, but the child and his trophy are underexposed.

2 The solution was to lighten the photo overall with the brightness adjustment, add a bit more contrast and increase the color saturation to give the image more pizzazz. Now the important parts of the photo look just right in exposure and color intensity.

3 The author and a largemouth bass she caught while canoeing. The red vest makes the photo, but there's a lot of extra lake to the right and her legs are twisted uncomfortably under the canoe seat.

4 By cropping the photo to show the angler from the waist up and the bass, the story of the photo is still told. The photo has become an attractive portrait. The photo was also lightened slightly with the brightness tool, and the distracting fishing line was removed with the clone stamping tool.



5 Here are the author's niece, Lauren, and her boyfriend, Steve, sharing the joy of their first steelhead fishing trip and his first catch. However, Lauren's dad is a distraction in the left background and too much of the stream shows on the right-hand side of the photo. Now let's make this fishing photo a true keepsake for the happy couple.



6 Instead of a standard rectangular crop, let's use the crop tool to create an oval that frames Steve, Lauren and the fish, cutting out her father and most of the creek.

7 Sometimes the absence of color is striking in a photo or is a step to another image alteration.

8 Using the feather option, the hard-edge line of the cropped oval was replaced with a soft edge that melts the image nicely into the background.

9 The author adjusted the photo's color balance by adding a little yellow and red to create an old-fashioned sepia-tone portrait.

