



Removing/Adding Elements and Background Replacement

In Chapter 4, we learned the importance of composing a good image before snapping the picture. When this rule is practiced, it can eliminate the need to make digital alterations that could have been avoided.

Of course, sometimes these situations can't always be avoided•when they can't, Pixlr Editor can be used to modify the image.

In this chapter, we'll learn the following:

- *Removing Unwanted Elements*: In this part, we'll learn how to improve an image by removing unnecessary objects.
- *Adding Elements*: In this part, we'll digitally add a second bird to the image being worked with throughout this chapter.
- *Background Replacement*: This part will demonstrate how to switch a so-so background to one with more appeal.

Removing Unwanted Elements

In this tutorial, we'll learn how to remove some distracting objects from an image.

TUTORIAL 17: REMOVING DISTRACTING ELEMENTS

Borrowing Image Data to Cover Unwanted Objects

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Open the image titled Cho8_Macaw.jpg found in the Cho8 Practice Images folder.

2. Click the Lasso tool icon (or press L on your keyboard).
3. Set the Feather radius to 15 in the tool options bar. This will help the copied image data of the foliage to blend in better.
4. Make a selection around some of the foliage just above the feeder (Figure 8-1).



Figure 8-1. Use the Lasso tool to make a selection around some of the foliage just above the feeder

5. Copy (choose Edit ► Copy) and paste (Edit ► Paste) the selected area to a new layer.
6. Click the Move tool icon, then move the copied image data over the feeder (Figure 8-2).

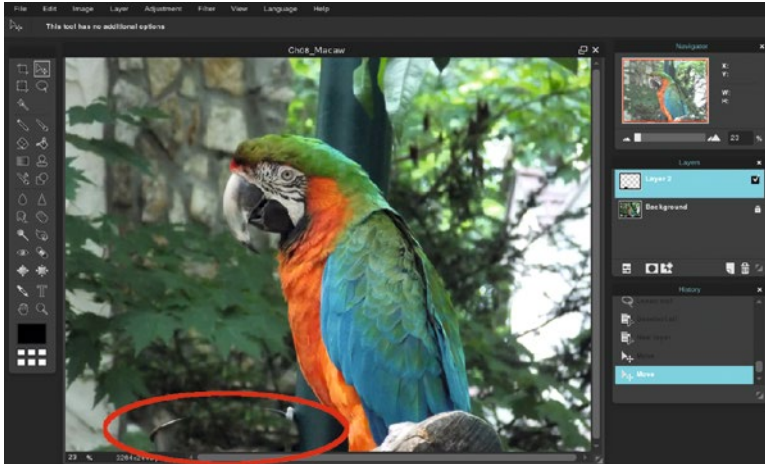


Figure 8-2. Move the copied image data of the foliage over the feeder

7. Rename the new layer Foliage using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
8. Click the Clone Stamp tool icon (or press S on your keyboard). Make sure the Sample All Layers option is checked.
9. Select the soft, round brush with a 150-pixel diameter from the presets.
10. Use the Clone Stamp tool to blend the foliage and cover up any obvious gaps, repeating patterns, etc. It should resemble the example shown in Figure 8-3. Make sure no excess image data is covering the bird's body—if it is, use the Eraser tool to remove it.

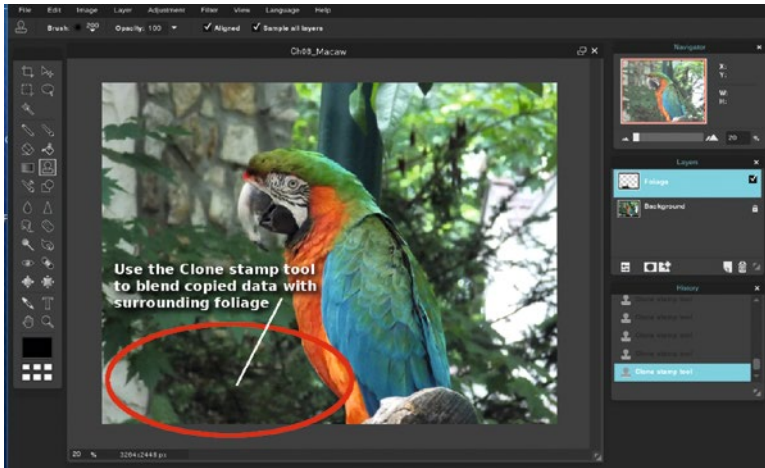


Figure 8-3. Use the Clone Stamp tool to blend and cover up any gaps

11. Click the background layer to make it active.
12. Click the Lasso tool icon (or press L on your keyboard) and use the same Feather radius setting as before.
13. Make a selection around some of the foliage just above the bird's back (Figure 8-4).

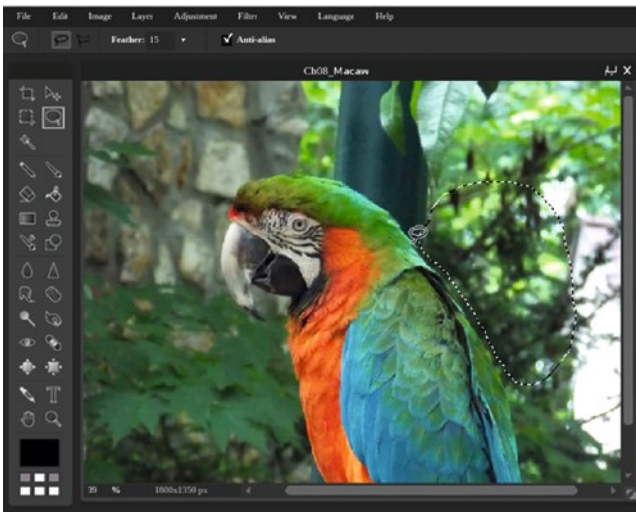


Figure 8-4. Make a selection just above the bird as shown

14. Copy (Edit ► Copy) and paste (Edit ► Paste) the selected area to a new layer.
15. Rename the new layer *Foliage 2* using the layer thumbnail's box.
16. Use the Move tool to position the layer above the head, then use the Free Transform command (Edit ► Free Transform) to rotate the layer slightly counter-clockwise (Figure 8-5).

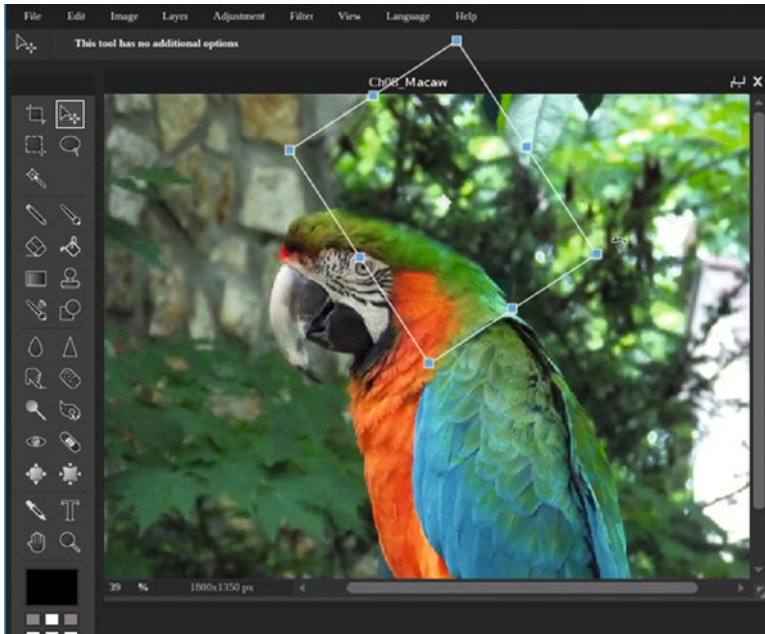


Figure 8-5. Rotate the layer slightly counter-clockwise

17. Click the Move tool icon, then move the copied image data over the post—some of it will need to slightly cover the bird to completely cover the post.
18. Click the Eraser tool icon (or press E on your keyboard) and remove the overlapping image data (Figure 8-6).

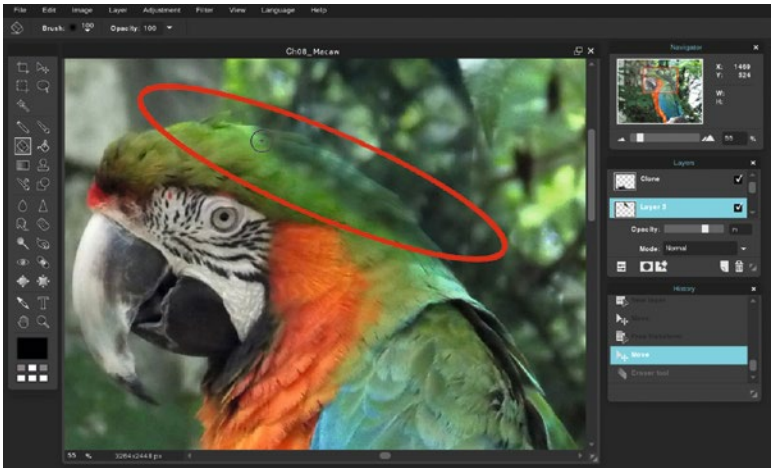


Figure 8-6. Use the Eraser tool to remove the excess image data

19. Use the Clone Stamp tool to blend the foliage image data in with its surroundings (Figure 8-7). Be sure to sample often from various areas to avoid repeating patterns.

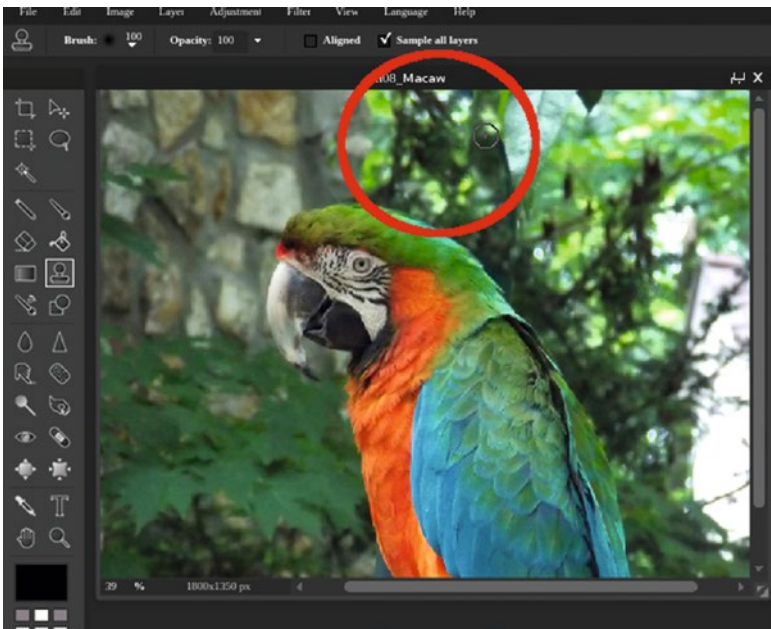


Figure 8-7. Use the Clone Stamp tool to blend the foliage in with the surroundings

Figure 8-8 shows the before and after comparison. When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*



Figure 8-8. Before and after comparison

Adding Elements

I thought it might be nice to give our macaw friend a companion to keep him company. In this tutorial, we'll learn how to add a bird from another photo.

TUTORIAL 18: ADDING ELEMENTS

The Addition of a Second Bird from a Different Source Image

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Open the image titled `Ch08_Macaw (Edited).jpg` found in the `Ch08 Practice Images` folder (this version will resemble the result from the previous tutorial with the post and feeder removed).
2. Open the image titled `Ch08_Cockatoo.jpg` found in the `Ch08 Practice Images` folder as a layer (Layer ► Open Image as Layer).
3. The image of the cockatoo now exists as a layer over the background layer. Using the Toggle Layer Settings dialog box, lower the opacity of the imported layer to 50%—this will help make it easier to move into position.

4. Rename the layer Cockatoo using the layer thumbnail's textbox and move it into the position indicated in Figure 8-9 using the Move tool.

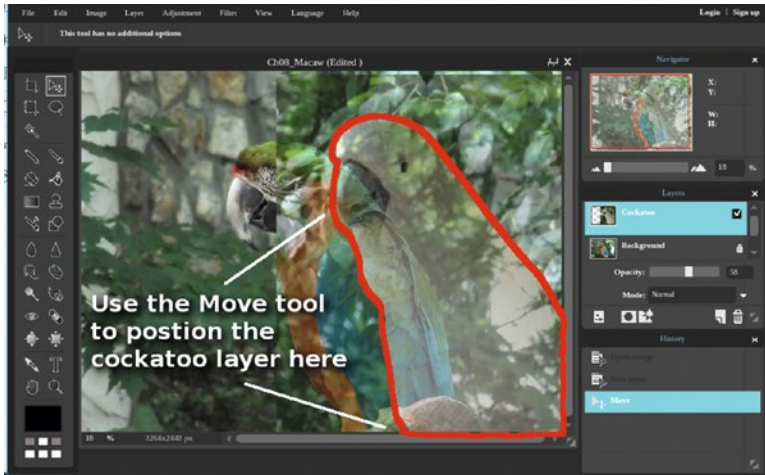


Figure 8-9. Use the Move tool to position the Cockatoo layer as indicated here

5. Restore the layer's opacity to 100% using the Toggle Layer Settings dialog box.
6. Add a layer mask using the Toggle Layer Settings dialog box (the Cockatoo layer will seem to disappear, but it's still there).

■ **Note** Layer masks are discussed in greater detail in *The Beginner's Guide to Layers* PDF, which can be obtained from the Source Code/Downloads tab from this Apress page: <http://www.apress.com/9781484226971>.

7. Click the Brush tool icon (or press B on your keyboard). Select the hard, 200-pixel diameter brush from the presets.

8. Click the layer mask to make it active (indicated by a red border) and paint to reveal the cockatoo (Figure 8-10). Don't worry about the pixels outside of the bird being revealed—that will be dealt with shortly.

Note As you paint in the layer mask, each stroke is indicated by a green overlay. When the mouse button is released, the overlay disappears and the portion of the image the stroke covered is revealed.

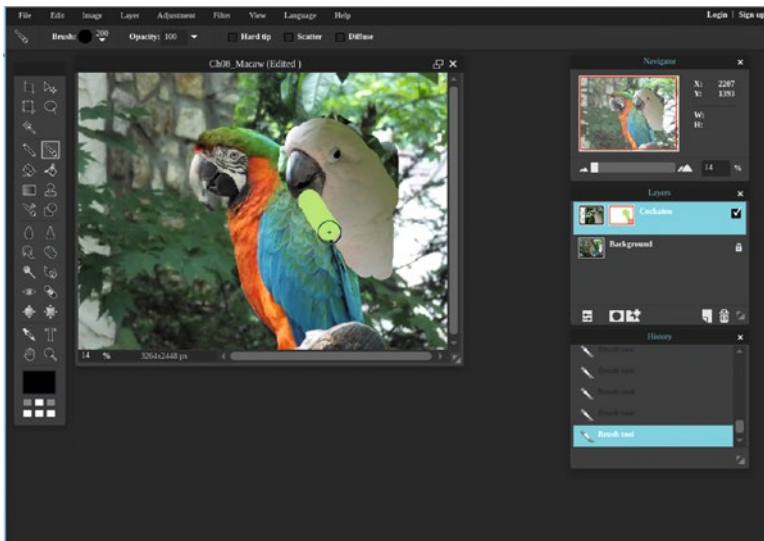


Figure 8-10. Paint in the layer mask to reveal the cockatoo

9. After the cockatoo is revealed, we need to hide the fringe (excess) image data around it. Click the Eraser tool icon (or press E on your keyboard).
10. Select a small brush 30-50 pixels in diameter. Set the hardness to 70%.
11. Zoom in using the Navigator and work along the edge carefully to restore the mask, hiding the excess image data around the cockatoo (Figure 8-11).

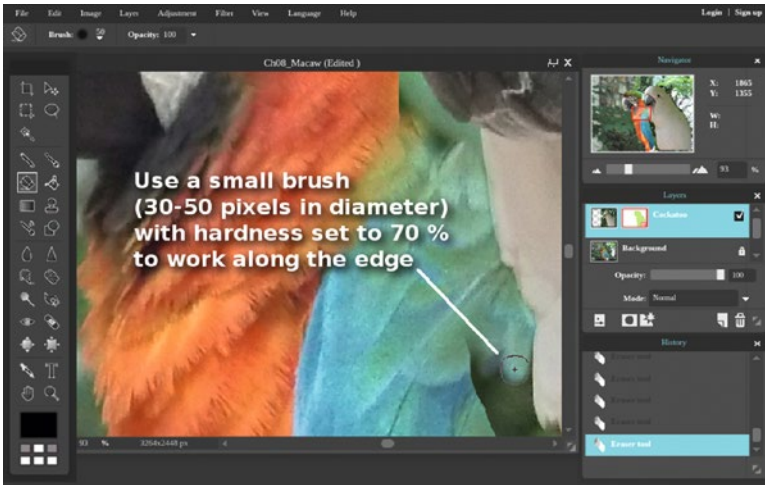


Figure 8-11. Work along the edge carefully

12. After working along the entire edge, switch to a larger brush to remove the larger areas.
13. Look over the entire layer closely to make sure there aren't any stray (or missing) pixels.

Figure 8-12 shows the before and after comparison. When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PSD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

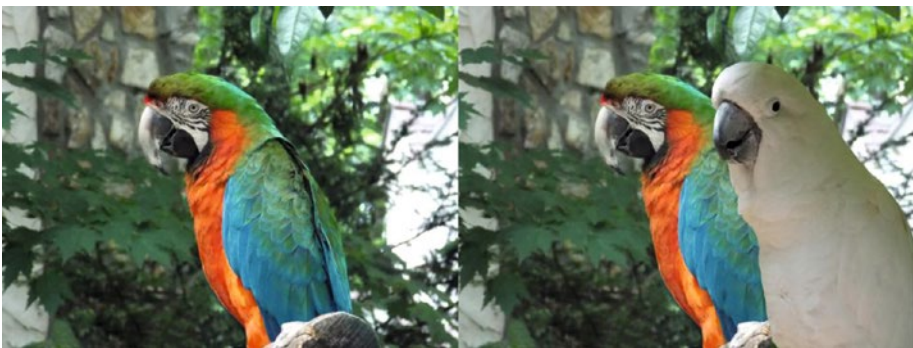


Figure 8-12. Before and after comparison

Background Replacement

Sometimes, images can be improved by using a different background. In the upcoming tutorial, we'll replace a plain light background (which is actually a wall) and replace it with something more stylish.

In many cases, using a layer mask as we did in the previous tutorial will work fine. If the subject has a smooth outline, then it's usually fairly easy to paint the subject into a new background and use the Eraser tool to remove the excess image data.

However, putting images of people on a different background can sometimes be challenging. For example, not everyone has straight, smooth hair and isolating curly hair can be difficult.

Fortunately, the method used in the upcoming lesson can deal with that issue easily. It might not work in every scenario, but it works well in high-contrast images with light backgrounds.

TUTORIAL 19: BACKGROUND REPLACEMENT

Replacing a Wall with a Studio Background

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Open the image titled `Ch08_Studio Background.jpg` found in the `Ch08 Practice Images` folder.
2. Open the image titled `Ch08_Portrait of Young Woman.jpg` found in the `Ch08 Practice Images` folder as a layer (choose **Layer ► Open Image as Layer**).
3. Rename the layer `Portrait` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Change the layer's blending mode to **Darken** using the Toggle layer settings (Figure 8-13). The lightest areas will become transparent, leaving the darkest portions of the image intact.

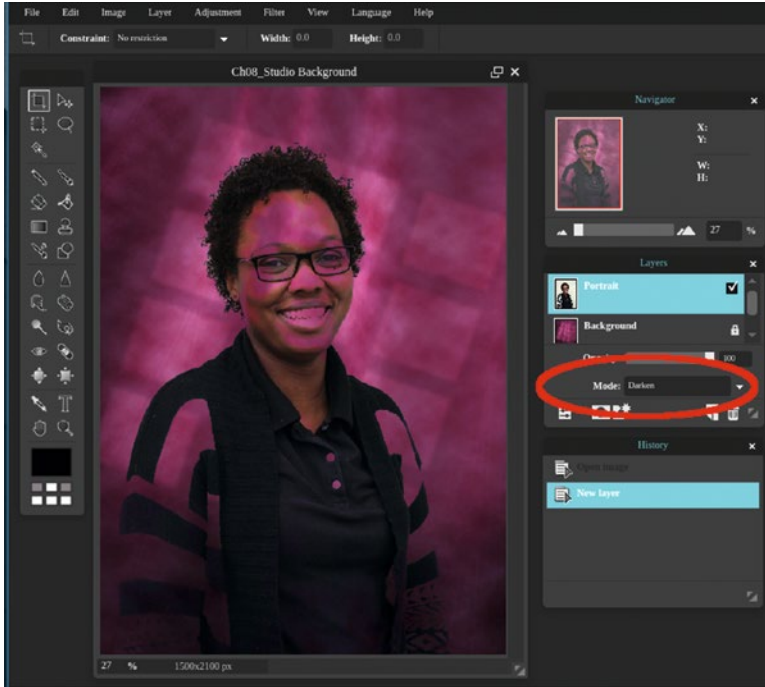


Figure 8-13. Change the Blending mode to Darken to make the background transparent and keep the dark portions intact

5. Duplicate the layer (Layer ► Duplicate Layer) and change the blending mode to Normal.
6. Click the Lasso tool icon (or press L on your keyboard).
7. Make a selection of the background, getting close to the young woman (Figure 8-14).



Figure 8-14. Use the Lasso tool to select most of the background

8. Clear the pixels (Edit ► Clear). Press Control+D to deactivate the selection.
9. Click the Eraser tool icon (or press E on your keyboard). Select the soft, 150-pixel diameter brush from the presets.
10. Starting on the left side, erase the fringe area of the background along the hair, as shown in Figure 8-15. This reveals the pixels of the underlying layer that remained intact when the blending mode was changed to Darken in Step 4.

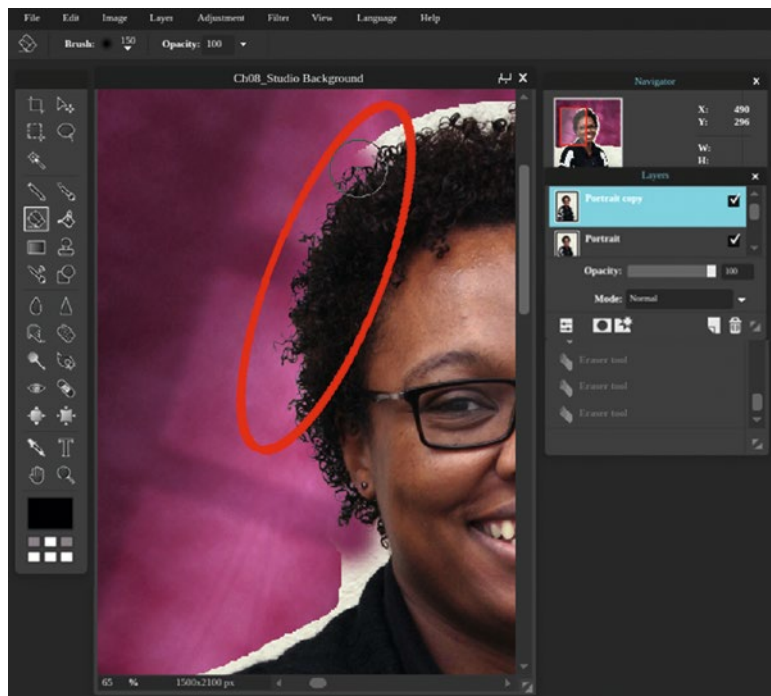


Figure 8-15. Use the Eraser tool to remove the fringe area of the background, revealing the intact pixels of the underlying layer

11. Reduce the brush size to 30 pixels and set the hardness to 75% in the Tool Options dialog box, then work along the edge of the face and sweater (Figure 8-16).

Note As you work along the image with the Eraser tool, precision isn't quite as important in the darker areas since the underlying pixels are intact. However, in the white areas of the sweater, be sure to use care along the edge.

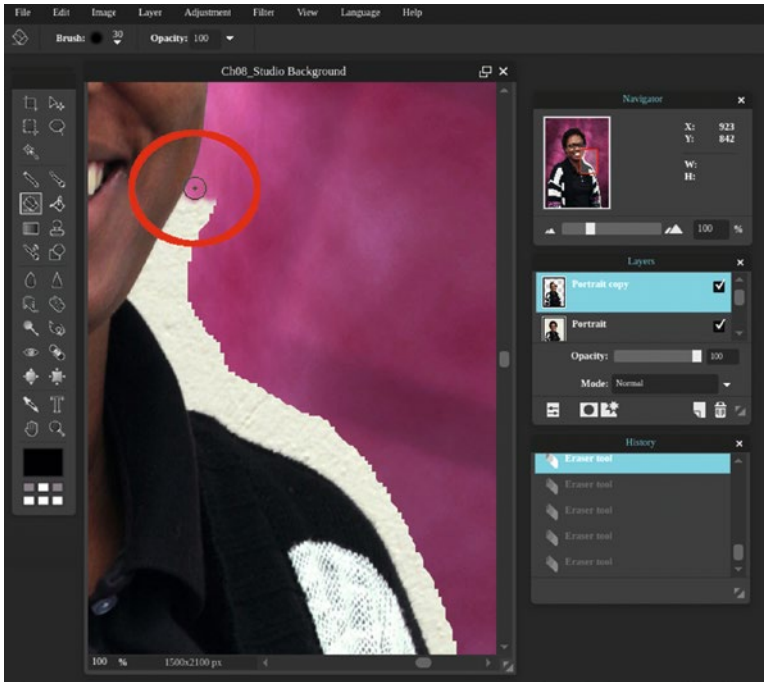


Figure 8-16. Use a smaller brush to work along the face and sweater

12. Finish removing the fringe along the sweater on both sides (Figure 8-17).

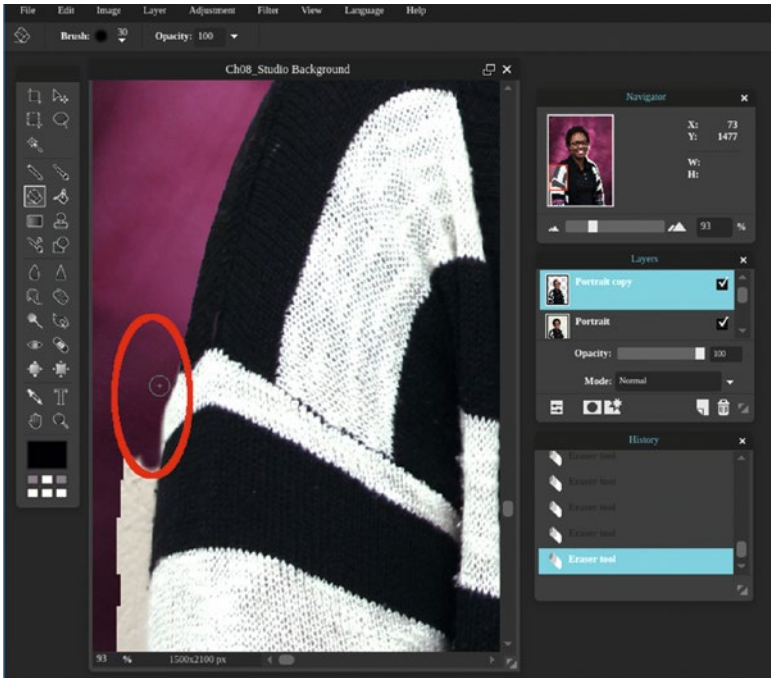


Figure 8-17. Finish removing the fringe area on the sweater

Figure 8-18 shows the before and after comparison. When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PSD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

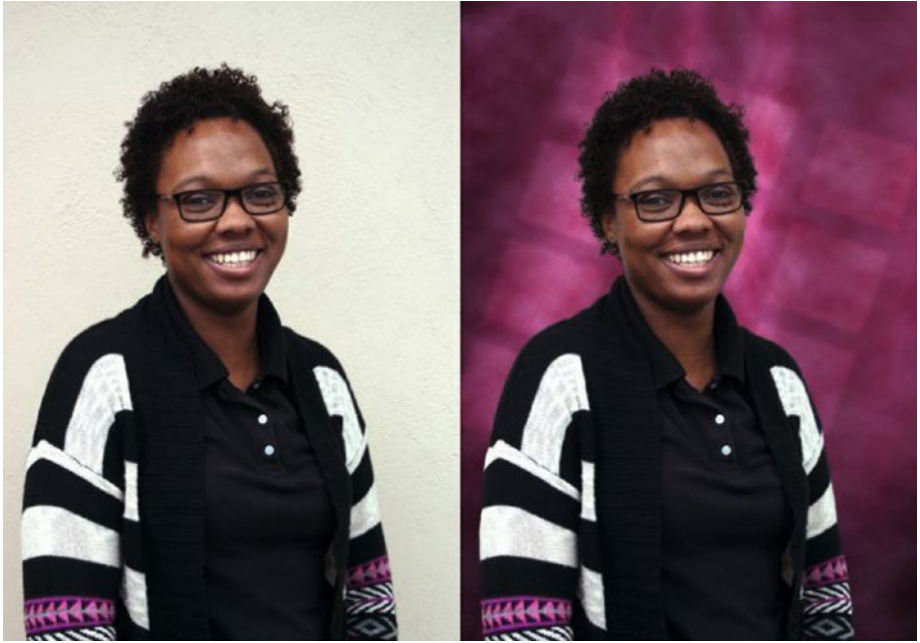


Figure 8-18. Before and after comparison

If you had been working with the opposite situation in this tutorial (which would be light hair against a dark background), the layer named Portrait would be set to the Lighten blend mode (Figure 8-19).

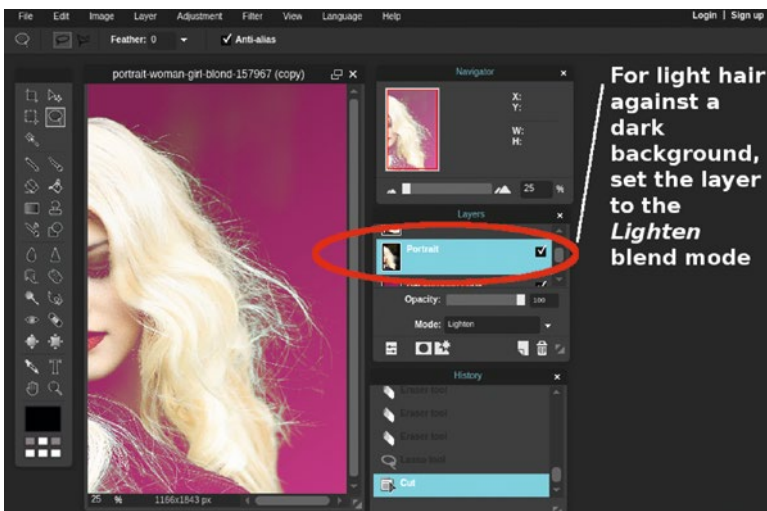


Figure 8-19. For light hair against a dark background, set the layer to the Lighten blend mode

Summary

This chapter described several techniques for removing unwanted elements, adding elements, and replacing backgrounds.

In the first tutorial, unwanted items were removed by borrowing surrounding portions of the image and using the Clone Stamp tool to help blend it in for a seamless edit.

Next, we added an image of a cockatoo to go along with the macaw by using a layer mask. Using the Brush tool, it was “painted” in, and the fringe (excess) image data was removed using the Eraser tool.

In the last tutorial, we replaced the background of the image of a young woman. By using a layer with the Darken blend mode, the curly hair was kept intact, making the process fairly easy.

The next chapter covers using some of the adjustments and filters to create some fun projects.