



Challenge Image: Sandhill Crane

In this lesson, I'll guide you through editing an image of a Sandhill Crane, focusing on removing background elements and extending the canvas. We'll explore two primary methods: a quick approach using generative AI and a more manual, skill-based method that's typically allowed in photography competitions.

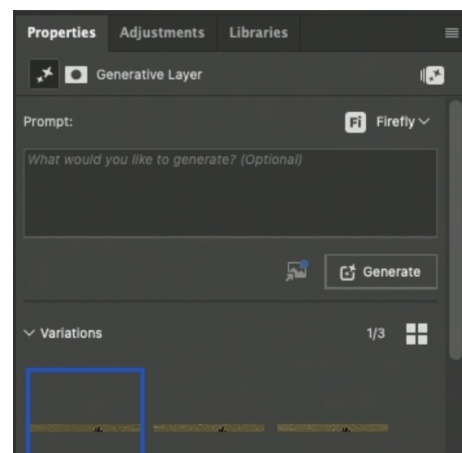
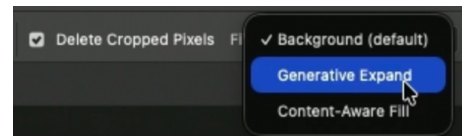


Method 1: Using Generative AI

This method leverages Photoshop's generative AI tools to automate much of the editing process.

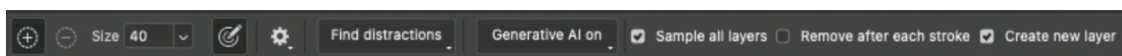
Extending the Canvas

1. **Select the Crop Tool:** Choose the Crop Tool from the toolbar.
2. **Access Fill Options:** In the Options bar at the top, find the "Fill" dropdown menu.
3. **Choose Generative Expand:** Select "Generative Expand" from the Fill options. This tells Photoshop to use AI to fill the new space.
4. **Expand the Canvas:** Drag the handles of the crop tool to extend the canvas upwards, creating space for the bird's feathers. Press Enter or Return to apply.
5. **Review Variations:** Photoshop will generate three variations of the extended canvas. Review these in the Properties panel and select the one you prefer.



Removing Background Elements (Birds and Reflections)

1. **Select the Remove Tool:** Navigate to the "Spot Healing Brush" tool and select the "Remove Tool" from the flyout menu.
2. **Enable Generative AI:** Ensure the "Auto" option is selected in the tool's settings, which allows it to use generative AI.
3. **Sample All Layers:** Turn on "Sample All Layers" in the Options bar. This is crucial because the AI needs to see all layers, including the newly expanded canvas.



4. **Create a New Layer:** For non-destructive editing, enable "Create New Layer" in the tool's options.
5. **Disable "Remove After Each Stroke":** Uncheck this option to allow multiple removals to be processed at once, saving time.
6. **Paint Over Elements:** Carefully paint over the background cranes and their reflections. Ensure you cover the entire element you wish to remove.
7. **Apply Changes:** Click the checkbox in the Options bar to apply the removals. Photoshop will process these and generate a new layer with the elements removed.



8. **Evaluate and Refine:** Compare the original image with the edited one by toggling the top layer on and off. If any feather shapes are distorted, you can use selection tools (like the Object Selection Tool) and layer masks to refine them.

Method 2: Manual Editing (Without Generative AI)

This method requires more hands-on Photoshop skills and is suitable for competitions that do not allow generative AI to be used.

Removing Background Elements

1. **Select the Subject:** Use the "Select Subject" command in the Select menu to automatically select the main Sandhill Crane.
2. **Refine the Selection:** Manually adjust the selection using the Lasso Tool to exclude any parts of the background cranes or their reflections that were mistakenly included. Hold the Option key (Alt on Windows) to subtract from the selection.
3. **Create a New Layer:** In the Layers panel, create a new, empty layer. This ensures your retouching is non-destructive.
4. **Prepare for Healing:** To ensure the healing tools blend correctly, you need to create a small "gap" between the element you want to remove and the surrounding area. This prevents the tool from trying to match the color of the bird itself.

5. **Use the Clone Stamp Tool:**

- Select the Clone Stamp Tool.
- Ensure "Current & Below" is selected in the Options bar at the top for the screen.
- Hold down the Option key (Alt on Windows) and click on an area of the background (e.g., dirt or water) that has the desired color and brightness. This sets your source point.
- Paint within the area you want to remove, ensuring you create that small gap around the element. This technique helps the healing tools blend seamlessly.



6. **Apply Healing Brushes:**

- Once you have created these gaps, switch to the **Spot Healing Brush**.
- Ensure "Sample All Layers" is turned **on**.
- Paint over the elements you want to remove, focusing on painting within the gaps you created. This allows the tools to sample the correct background textures and colors from the surrounding areas.



7. **Address Reflections and Edges:** Pay close attention to reflections on the water and areas where the elements meet the edge of the frame. You may need to create gaps in these areas as well to ensure proper blending.

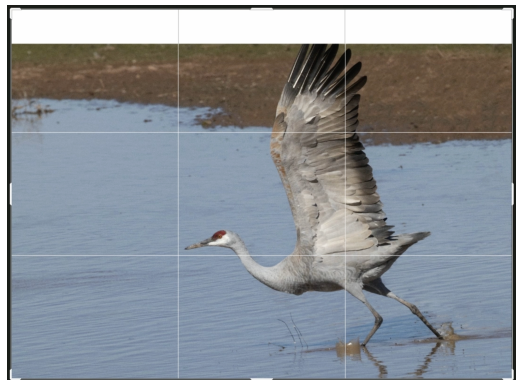
8. **Break Down Complex Areas:** For intricate areas, break down the retouching into smaller, manageable sections by creating additional gaps. This allows you to work on each part independently.



9. **Check for Repetition:** After retouching, zoom out and inspect the image for any obvious repeating patterns or unnatural-looking areas. Use the Clone Stamp or Healing Brush to break up these repetitions.

Extending the Canvas Manually

1. **Use the Crop Tool:** Select the Crop Tool.
2. **Expand Canvas:** Drag the handles to extend the canvas upwards. Press Enter or Return.
3. **Content-Aware Fill (Not Recommended for AI-Free):** While "Content-Aware Fill" can be used, it may still incorporate AI-like elements. For a purely manual approach, we'll use the Clone Stamp.
4. **Use the Clone Stamp Tool:**
 - Select the Clone Stamp Tool.
 - Set the brush hardness to around 75-80% for a less soft edge.
 - Option-click (Alt-click on Windows) on a suitable green area in the upper part of the image to set your source.
 - Paint across the newly added canvas area, working in sections and varying your source points by Option-clicking in different green areas. This helps to create a natural-looking texture and avoid repetitive patterns.
 - Use the Shift key to draw straight lines when painting across.



5. **Refine with Healing Brush:** Once you have a base of green color, use the Healing Brush.
 - Option-click on distinct details in the green background (like small bright specks).
 - Paint these details into the extended canvas area. The Healing Brush will blend them with the surrounding green, making them look natural.
 - Consider using the Clone Source panel to flip or rotate copied elements for further variation.

Extending Feathers Manually

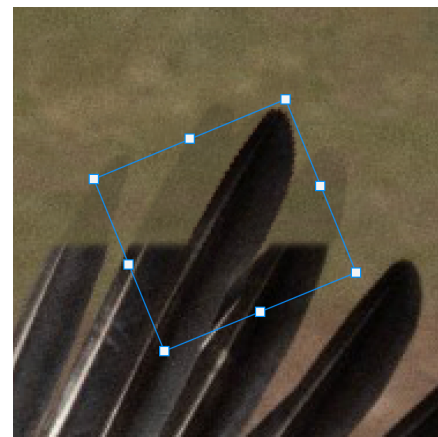
1. **Create a Guide:** To accurately extend the feathers, I'll use a generative AI and the Object Selection Tool to create a selection of feathers on a duplicated image. This selection will serve as a guide for the manual placement. I'll deviate here from the video lesson since I thought of a better method to achieve the same result.

- Choose Image>Duplicate.
- Use the Marquee tool to select the area at the top of the image where you used the clone tool earlier to fill in the empty area and make sure the selection overlaps the top edge of the feathers by at least a few pixels.
- Choose Edit>Generative Fill, leave the prompt area empty and click the Generate button which should extend the feathers.
- Choose Select>Subject to select the Sandhill crane.
- With any selection tool active, click within the active selection and drag until your cursor is over the document tab for the version of the image that we were working on earlier. Before releasing the mouse button, be sure to move your mouse downward so your cursor is no longer over the document tab, hold shift and then release. That should move the selection to the original document while maintaining its position so it lines up with the crane.
- Create a new layer, paint with black within the selected area only in the area where the top of the feathers are missing.
- Lower the opacity of the layer to around 15% so you can just see a hint of where the feathers need to be added. That will serve as our visual reference for where we need to position our feathers.



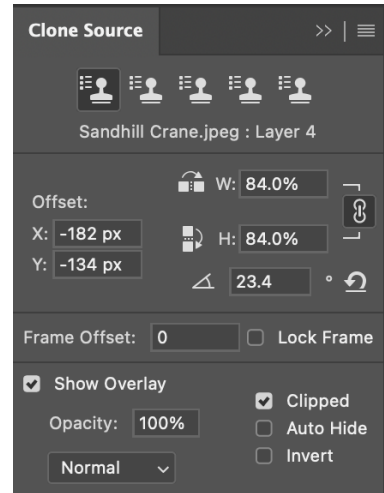
2. Method A: Free Transform and Layer Mask:

- Use the Quick Selection Tool or Lasso Tool to select an individual feather from the original image. Choose Edit>Copy Merged and then Edit>Paste to place a copy of the feather on its own layer.
- Use "Edit > Free Transform" (Cmd/Ctrl + T) to reposition, scale and rotate the feather until it matches the guide layer.
- **Establish Pivot Point:** To rotate by pivoting around the tip of the feather, Option-click (Alt-click) on the desired pivot point before transforming.
- Rotate and scale the feather to match the angle and size of the feathers below. Hold Option when scaling to maintain the position of the area you Option-clicked on above.
- Add a Layer Mask to the feather layer and use a soft brush to blend the edges.



3. Method B: Healing Brush and Clone Source Panel:

- Select the **Healing Brush** tool.
- Option-click (Alt-click) on the tip of a feather to set the source.
- Ensure "Aligned" is checked and the tool is set to "Current & Below" in the Options bar at the top of your screen.
- Click on the canvas where the feather tip should be and then choose Edit>undo. This sets the offset.
- Use the **Clone Source** panel to adjust the angle, scale, and even flip the copied feather if needed to make it match the underlying image. Hold Shift-Option and use the following keys to change the settings: < > = rotate, [] = scale, arrows = reposition.
- Paint the feather onto a new layer, using the angle and size adjustments to match the surrounding feathers.
- Use a layer mask and soft brush to blend the edges.



4. **Repeat and Refine:** Repeat this process for all the feathers that need extending, carefully blending them to look natural. Use the eraser tool to clean up any overspray.

