

## CONTENT AWARE FILL



Fill, using the Content Aware option (more popularly called Content Aware Fill) is one of the most hyped and showcased new features in Photoshop. It is usually the first new feature tried out by new licensees of the product. And if you're like the majority of people new to the product, you've probably had your share of disappointments when using it. I can go so far as to guess that you've had mixed results.

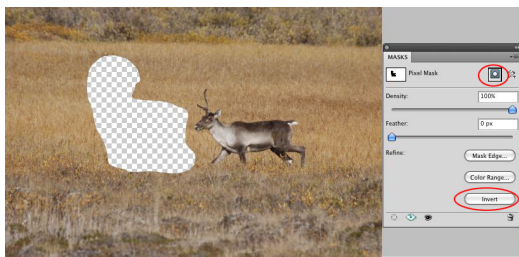
### WHAT CAN GO WRONG

The two major complaints about Content Aware Fill are 1) the deletion/change is noticeable—it just doesn't look all that seamless; and 2) sometimes the program picks up parts of objects you did not want included in the final image.

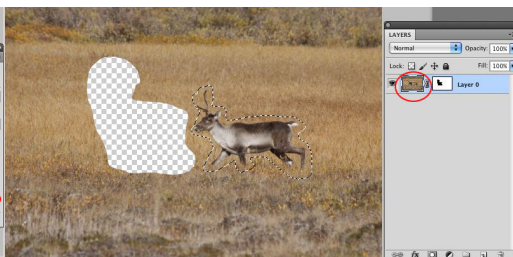
One of the easiest ways to remedy the first problem is to try again. The feature recalculates each time you try, so repeated usage may actually fix it. There have been times when I've had to fill the same area three or four

People who shoot their images as RAW files expect that after they take their pictures they are going to have to digitally process them. Colors, contrast and other values may be tweaked until the desired results are achieved. Those who shoot in the jpeg format may also do similar adjustments. Most of the time, that's all that needs to be done, but every once in a while there is some element in one of the pictures that a photographer might want to remove.

It could be an errant branch, the arm of a passerby or an out-of-focus bird that detracts from the image. In past versions of Photoshop, the Rubber Stamp and Healing Brush tools were all that were available to assist in the removal. But now with Photoshop CS5, we have a brand new option that does a great job of not only removing unwanted elements, but also filling pixels in the void left by the removal. This new option has attracted a great deal of attention.



Select the element you don't want and create a mask and invert the mask  
Steps 1-3



Select pixels in the Layer Palette. Then select the element you want to remove and apply Content Aware Fill.  
Steps 4-6



Delete the Layer Mask by dragging to Trash.  
Step 7

times before I finally got the results I wanted.

The bigger problem is when you end up including parts of the image you do not want. You can run into problems when you inadvertently pick up details of objects near the area you want to fill, causing you to add unwanted features in your image. But never fear: there is a way you can prevent this from happening.

### HOW TO MAKE IT RIGHT

Content Aware Fill should target the area you have in mind and leave the other elements alone. In the example presented here, the goal is to remove the caribou on the right and fill in the space with the background vegetation.

If I were to use the Lasso tool and encircle the caribou on the right, I might pick up parts of the caribou on the left after using the Content Aware Fill option. To prevent this requires a seven-step process.

### THE PROCESS

**STEP 1** - Using the Lasso Tool, select the object you do **not** want to influence Content Aware Fill. In this case I select the caribou on the left.

**STEP 2** - Go to the Mask Panel and select the Create New Mask icon in the upper right. You will see only your selection with the rest appearing as gray and white squares.

**STEP 3** - On the Mask Panel, click on the Invert button on the lower right. This will result in only the background showing and your selected area now in gray and white boxes, as in figure one.

**STEP 4** - On the Layers palette, click on the pixels icon (the one with the picture of your image) to make the pixels active and not the layer mask.

**STEP 5** - Using the Lasso Tool, select the object you want to remove; in this case, the caribou on the right.

**STEP 6** - Press the Shift + Delete/Backspace, and when the dialog box appears for Fill, make sure that it says Content Aware Fill under Use and click on OK.

**STEP 7** - On the layers palette, select the layer mask and click Trash, or click Trash on the Masks panel. When a dialog box comes

up asking if you should apply the mask to the layer before removing, select Delete.

These seven steps will ensure that Photoshop will ignore the pixels you do not want included when you use Content Aware Fill. Knowing this little trick will enable you to make the best use of this amazing tool. You will no longer have to worry about Content Aware Fill creating unwanted pixels in your images.

*Lewis Kemper specializes in nature and wildlife photography. He is a member of Canon's Explorers of Light, a group of some of the country's most influential photographers. Lewis's computer-enhanced images have been used in advertisements, magazines, books, cards, book-marks and calendars throughout the world. He teaches digital imaging seminars for Palm Beach Photographic Centre, Santa Fe Workshops and the Light Photographic Workshops. Lewis sells his Photoshop training DVDs at <http://www.LewisKemper.com>.*



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