

# Stretch Your Background

## By Bill Overton

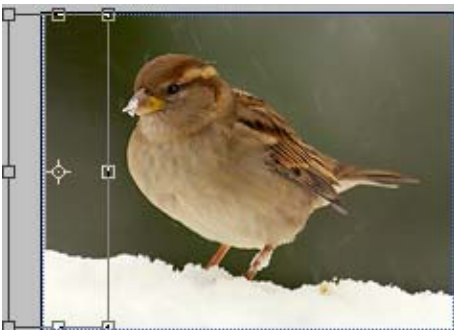
More often than not my photographs have too much background. In other words I did not get close enough to my subject for the lens being used. That's easy enough to fix. Simply crop the excess. Cropping also gives you an opportunity to improve composition by moving the subject up, down, right or left in the frame. Of course it is better to get it right in the camera, but when you can't there's PhotoShop.

The opposite situation is a little harder to fix. It occurs when you were lucky enough to have a subject pop up (or land) right in front of you. You get the photo but know that everyone will say, "nice shot but a little too tight in the frame". Or maybe the main point of interest is just a little too close to one edge. Now you have to add some background. Yes, you have to add something to the picture that's just not there ... or is it? I know of two ways to do this, but I'll bet there are more.



Both methods require increasing the size of the canvas. In PhotoShop go to '*Image > Canvas size*' and increase the dimension of the canvas in the direction necessary. If the background is a clear blue sky or some other totally out of focus, continuous colored element (ie: green foliage), you can use the clone tool to fill in the canvas. This method doesn't work well if there is any detail or pattern in the background because the cloning becomes obvious. So, instead of repeating the pattern by cloning it, we are going to stretch it.

Once the canvas is resized, select the '*rectangular marquee tool*' from the toolbox (or press m). Draw a rectangle starting at the top, somewhere around the middle of the added canvas. Draw down and into the image getting as close to the subject as possible. Do not include any of the subject or it will be stretched out of shape. Once the rectangle is drawn, right click within it, and select '*free transform*'. This will put handles (the small squares) around the rectangle. Select the center one on the edge away from the image and drag it away from the image. This will stretch the background out to the edge of your new, larger canvas. Now that perfect Bald Eagle in your photo has some flying room!



Like everything else you learn to work with in your digital darkroom, it may take a little practice. Sometimes the results may not be satisfactory. But you now have one more way to fix something that you didn't get quite right when you pressed the shutter.