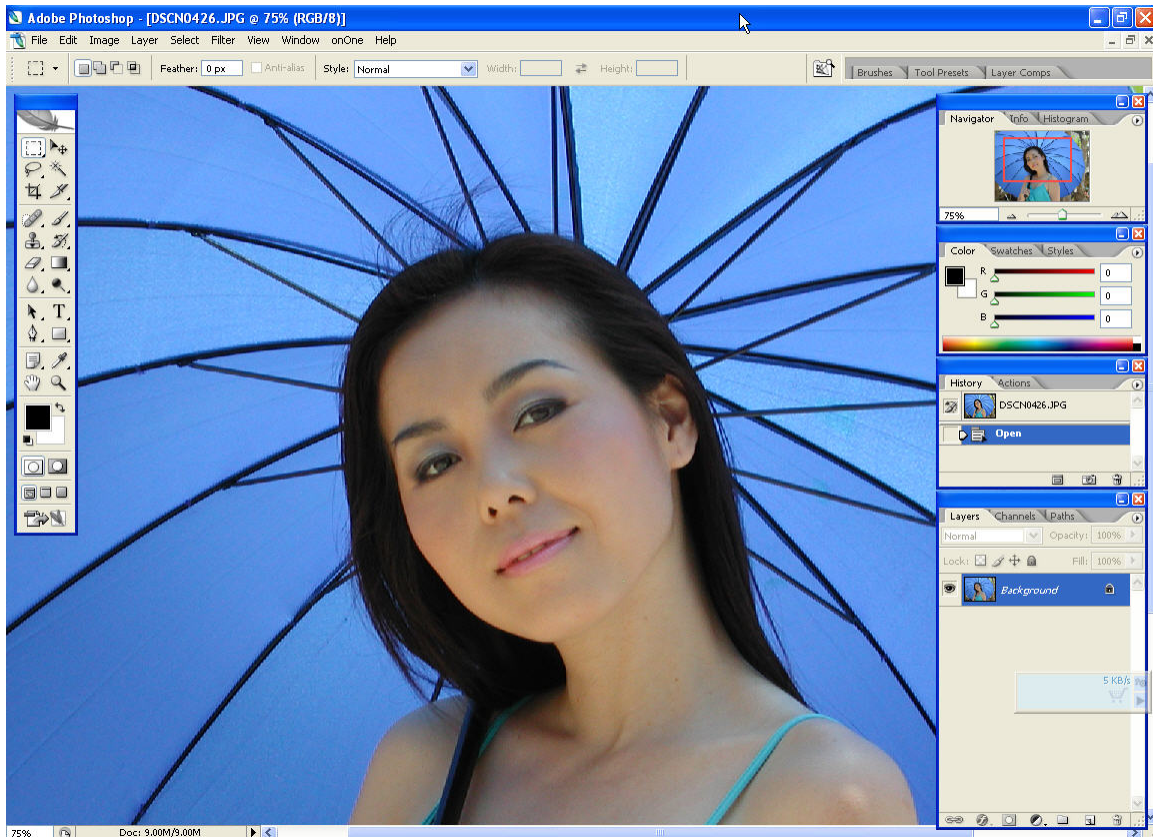


## Removing Fly-Away Hair

There are a lot of “easy” tasks you can do with PhotoShop, usually with a few quick clicks of the mouse. And then there are the challenging projects that should be easy but are not. Many of these require knowledge of tricks and some advanced Photoshop techniques. One of the most common such project is removing “fly-away” hair...those strands that are standing out from the subject’s head, either because of wind, grooming, or static electricity effects. Getting those “out of place” strands out of your pictures should be easy, but it actually requires a few tricks that not all Photoshop users know.

There are third-party plug-ins that can help with the fly-away hair problem (Mask Pro is popular for this task, for example) and the Photoshop Extract command can sometimes take care of a few strands quite adequately, but for tougher hair issues, the Channels palette is your best friend. Here’s how to do it...

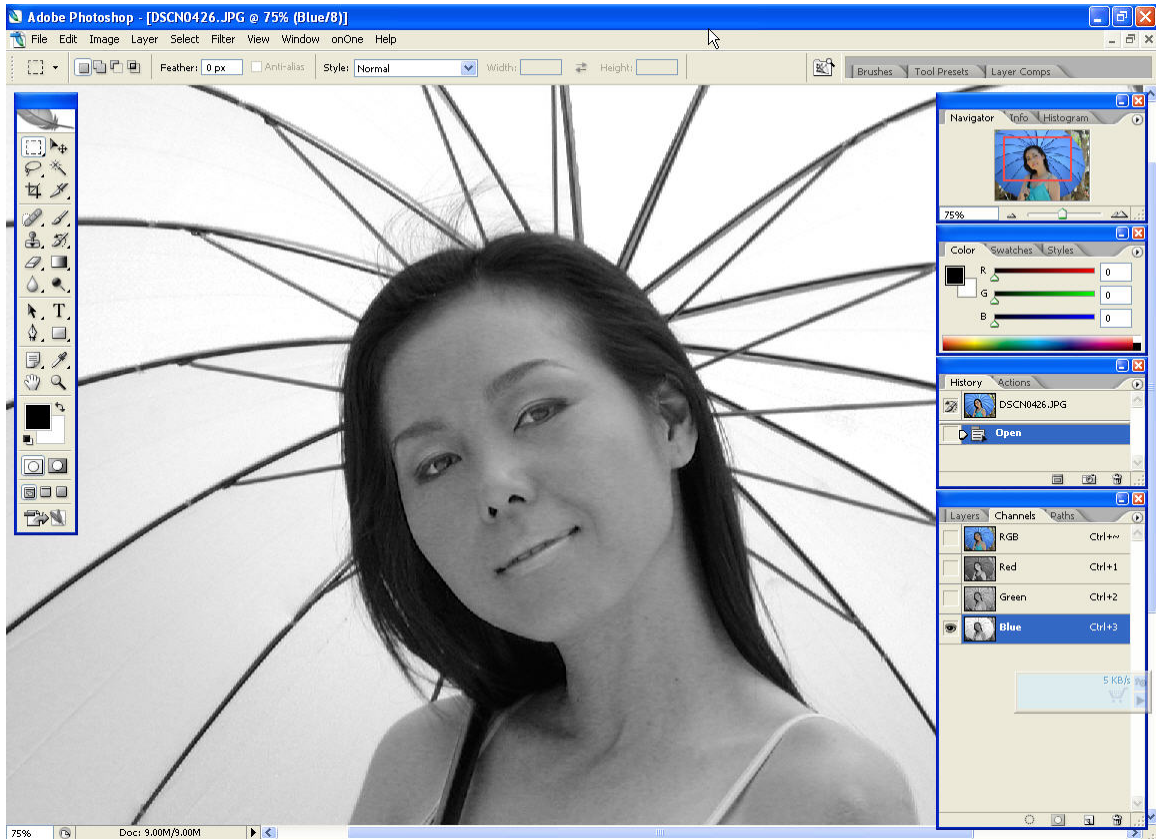
Start by opening the image you want to edit in Photoshop (the screenshots here show Photoshop CS2):



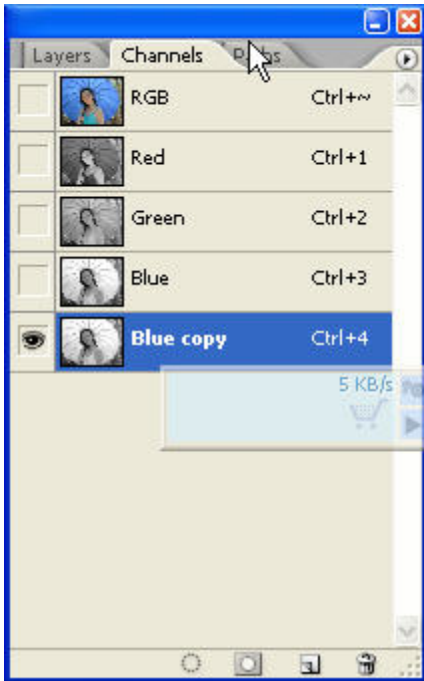
Next, open the Channels palette (the second tab in the Layers dialog):



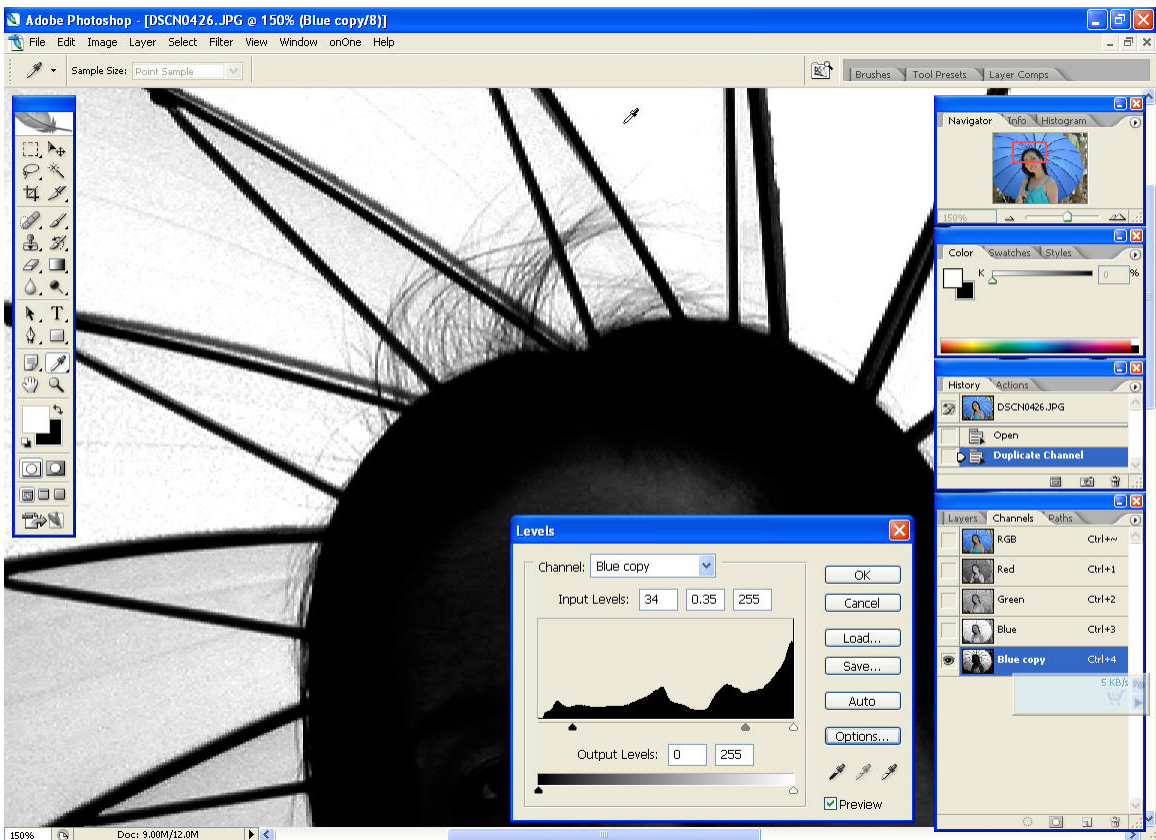
Go through each of the channels, one at a time, looking to see which channel has the largest amount of contrast between the background and the strands of hair you are trying to eliminate. You only need to look at the part of the image that has the fly-away hair strands; the rest of the image contrast does not affect this process. Using zoom tends to help this examination, considering the size of the hair strands. In the example photo with the overall blue dominance in the original image it's not surprising that the blue channel offers the best contrast of the three:



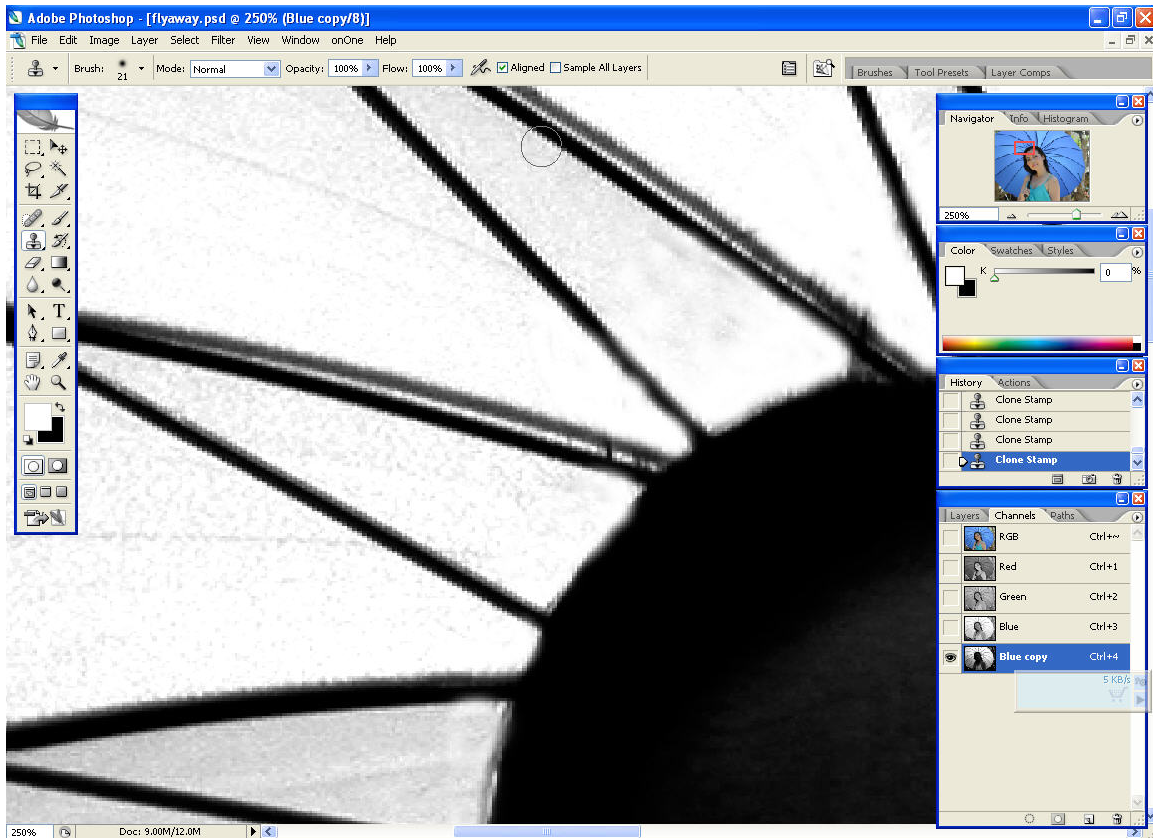
When you have identified the channel with the greatest contrast, create a new channel by simply dragging that channel to the New Channel button located at the bottom of the Channels palette. Click on the copied channel to make it active. Then, use either the Levels or Curves controls to maximize the contrast between the hair strands and the background.



Then click on the copied channel to make it active. Then, use either the Levels or Curves controls to maximize the contrast between the hair strands and the background:



Once you've got the maximum contrast, use the editing tools (Brush, Erase, Clone, and so on) to erase the fly-away hair (at high magnification is best) and replace the hair strands with the background image:



Finally, use the Lasso to grab the area. Make the Composite channel (the top channel in the Channels palette) active by clicking on it, and then Ctrl-click (for Windows, Command-click for Macs) on the newly masked channel to load that channel as a selection. Finally, work the background to ensure it is smooth, and then you can copy the entire image to paste it into a new image file. And there it is...fly-away hair banished from the final image.

