

## KEY SKILLS COVERED

What you'll learn

BUILD A  
BACKGROUND  
GRADIENT  
FILL TOOL  
MAGIC WAND  
EXTEND THE  
CANVAS  
FILTER GALLERY

# Creating a dramatic silhouette

Mesmerise your viewers by transforming an everyday image into a bold graphic work of art

## essentials

### SKILL LEVEL

Beginner  
Intermediate  
Expert

### TIME TAKEN

1 hour

### YOUR EXPERT

Deborah  
Sandidge

### ON THE DISC

Colourbirdimage.tif  
shoreline.tif



Choosing what visual story you want to tell, regardless of the limits of your original image, is both challenging and creatively rewarding.

Perhaps you loved your subject but not the surroundings. Maybe you envisioned a starry night, a sliver of moon, a stormy sky or a colourful sunset. The possibilities are endless.

Sometimes, what you want to create is simply not available through the lens at that moment. Photoshop however, enables you to turn your vision into a finished, creative work of art.

The finished image that you see here had humble beginnings. This particular bird, a black-necked stilt, has a wonderful shape, but the surroundings were less than stellar. We envisioned a more colourful and graphic image with greater impact. Silhouettes hold such mystery and intrigue, and are often more compelling than a regular photograph. In this tutorial we'll be

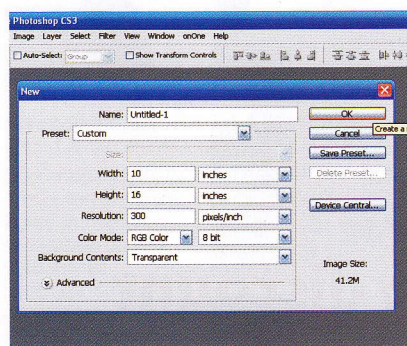
transforming an average photograph into a bold, colourful graphic work of art.

First we'll choose a subject that will be easy to separate from its background. Creating silhouetted images works best when you have many images of your subject to choose from. In general, you'll want to select the most interesting gesture, angle or pose to work with since it will be the centrepiece of the finished image.

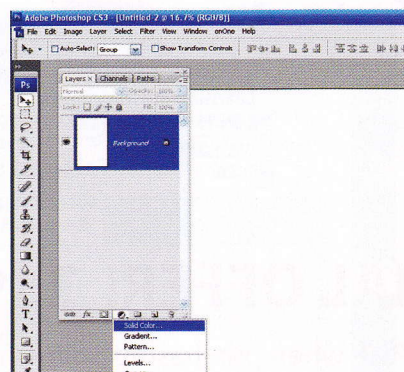
Photoshop has many tools that allow you to make a selection. The Magic Wand will enable you to work quickly and will be used in this tutorial. After that, you'll create a new environment and background for your subject. Tools that will help you do this include a gradient for the variation in the sky, and the use of a brush to create the large golden sun. We'll extend our canvas by using the Crop tool to provide extra room to work with. Our image will be enhanced by a wavy reflection of our beautiful 'new' silhouette and sky. So let's get started!

## CREATING A GOLDEN SUNSET

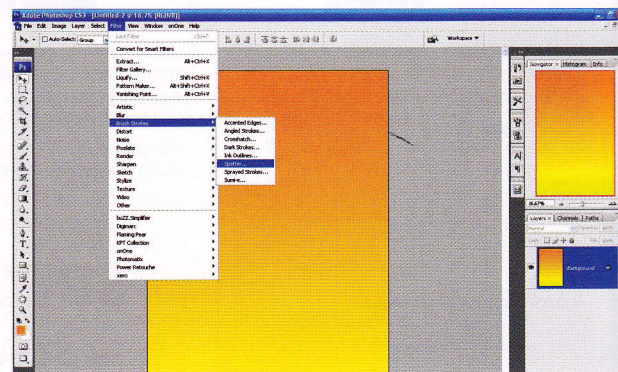
The simple steps that allow you to create a silhouette



**01 Create a new background** We'll begin with the new surroundings and background for our feathered friend. First go to File>New to create a new document, then in the Image Size dialog box, type Width 10, Height 17, Resolution 300. Next, under Image>Mode select RGB.



**02 Building the foundation** Fill the background (Edit>Fill) with solid yellow. In the Layers palette choose Create New Fill or Adjustment Layer>Solid Color. When the Color picker dialog opens, choose a bright yellow. We chose RGB 255,255 0.



**03 Keep it real** To tone down the yellow add an orange gradient to simulate sunset. We chose RGB 255,102, 51. In the Layers palette, hit New Fill or Adjustment Layer>Gradient>Reverse. Within the dialog, the gradient can be moved; to reposition, double-click the gradient layer. With the gradient positioned, go to Layer>Flatten Image. Hit Filter>Brushstrokes>Spatter with Spray Radius at 25, Smoothness at 1. This disguises any banding.

WORKS WITH | PHOTOSHOP CS2 AND ABOVE

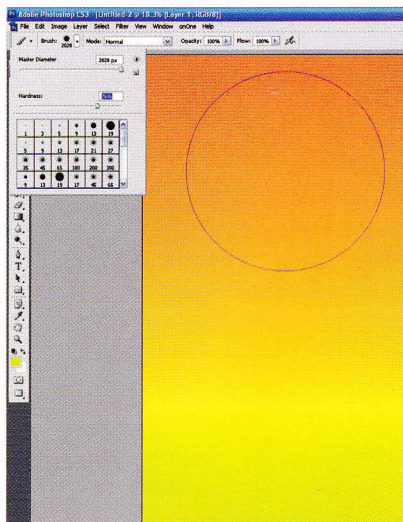




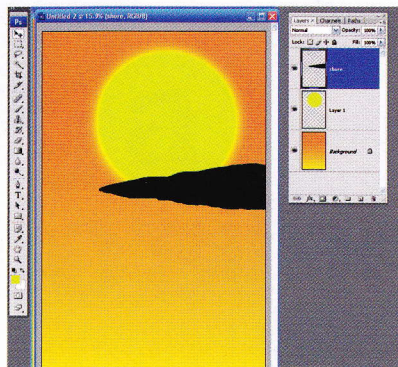


## FUN IN THE SUN

Create a custom sun with the stroke of a brush



**04 Creating the sun**  
Create a new layer and pick yellow to paint in the sun. We'll use a soft round brush 300 pixels, increasing the size to around 2028 pixels. One well placed touch of the brush will make a round sun. Experiment with the softness or hardness of the brush for the sun's edge. We chose 90% Hardness. To get a well defined sun, set the brush for more hardness. Adjust the layer opacity for a more subdued look.



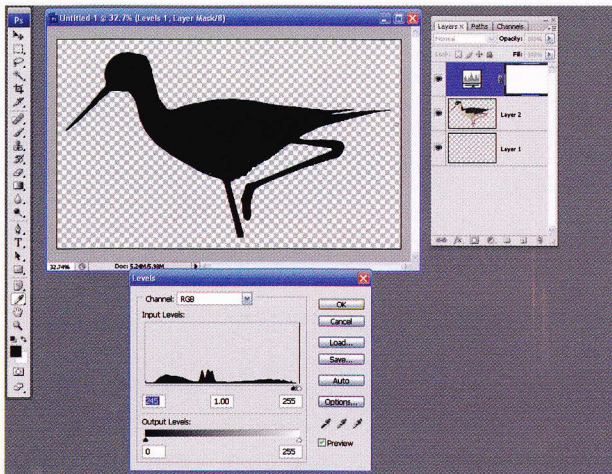
**05 Shifting the shoreline** Next, we will introduce the shoreline. Open the shoreline image. Use the Move tool to drag the shoreline into the new background image. Position the shoreline to fit as near the sun as you would like it.



**06 From colour to silhouette**  
Now we'll create a little magic by transforming our everyday bird image into a stunning silhouette. Open the colour bird image. We will use the Magic Wand to easily separate the bird from the background. There are several other tools that will also accomplish this. The Extract filter can also be used, or try the new Quick Selection tool in PS3.



**07 Capturing the bird** To select the bird, on the original photo do a loose selection around it using the Lasso, and put it on a duplicate layer (Ctrl/Cmd+J). Now use the Magic Wand to select the blue background. Backspace or delete to remove the blue surrounding the bird. You should have a new layer containing just the bird. Voila, the bird is on its own layer!

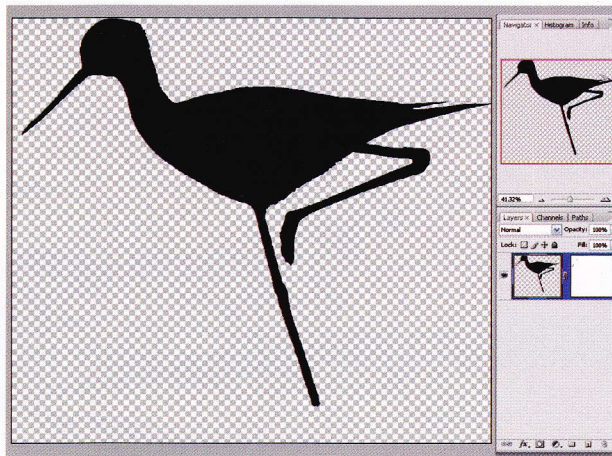
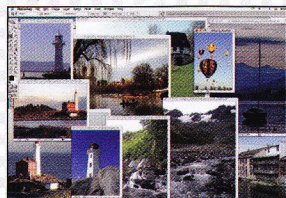


**08 Create the silhouette**  
Open a new document with a transparent background. Drag the top (bird) layer into it. Go to the image with the bird selected. Hold Shift; drag the bird into the new document. Use a Levels adjustment; in the Layers palette, hit New Adjustment Layer icon > Levels. Move the left slider to the right until the bird darkens to a silhouette. Merge the layers, Ctrl/Cmd+E.

## Create a library

Step out of your comfort zone

Start a collection of images to work with! Anything you desire, the possibilities are endless: dramatic skies, unique textures or patterns or colourful leaves. You could photograph aged and peeling paint, cracks in a sidewalk or rust on a car. Think in terms of themes when it comes to collecting images. Trees in various stages through the seasons, reflections, any subject in silhouette, the changing weather – anything goes. Think and shoot outside your normal subject and comfort zone when it comes to your library. Over time, you'll have at your fingertips plenty of resources to work with your ideas as they come to you. You'll enjoy photographing new and different subjects to add to your own library. Work with your favourite subjects and continually find new favourites. The story is yours to tell. Experiment with ideas and let your imagination run wild!



**09 Extend the canvas** To increase canvas size, use the Crop tool. Select the area around the bird with the Crop tool; drag the area below downwards to create space. Double-click to crop. We'll extend the bird's leg by painting a leg in this space. With a hard-edged brush of about 20 pixels, Hardness 100%, paint in more leg length if desired.



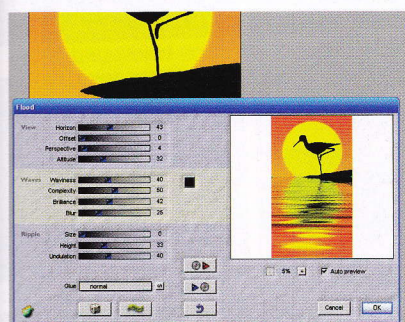


## SILHOUETTE SAVVY

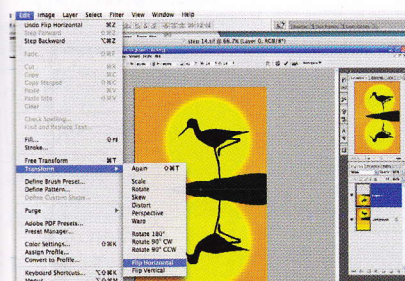
Adding the finishing touches to our image



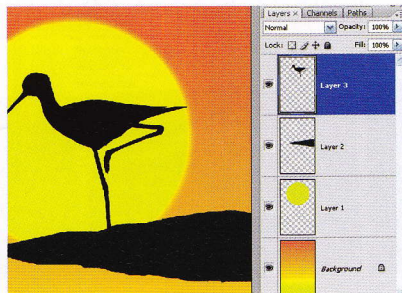
**10 Introducing the silhouette** We'll now insert our new silhouette into the background image. Drag the finished silhouette over to the new background with the Move tool or Edit>Copy and paste it into the new background, Edit>Paste. Our silhouette is now ready to be positioned to best suit the image. Use the Move tool to drag silhouette to the desired area.



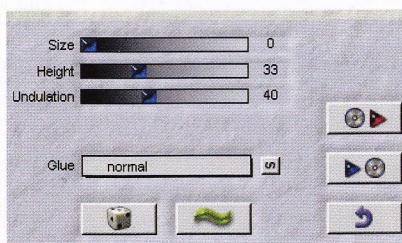
**13 The finale** Now for the reflection! We'll use a filter from Flaming Pear called the Flood filter. (If you don't have it, you can create your own reflection – see step 15). This filter lets you adjust the horizon to match the image. Waviness, complexity, brilliance and blur are all adjustable, along with size, height and undulation.



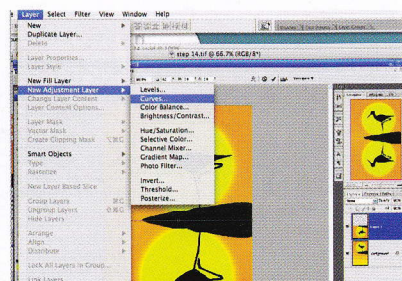
**15 D.I.Y** To create a reflection yourself, select the top half of the image at the horizon line with the Rectangular Marquee, then copy. With Move active, check Show Transform Controls. Hit Edit>Transform>Flip Vertical. Line up the selection with the bottom of the image and hit Enter. Select this area with the Rectangular Marquee. Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur (40px) softens.



**11 Arranging your image** If you wish to move the shoreline, sun or bird, just click on the appropriate layer in the Layers palette to make your selection active. Move to the desired location by choosing the silhouette, shoreline or sun layer. You can choose how you'll tell your story!

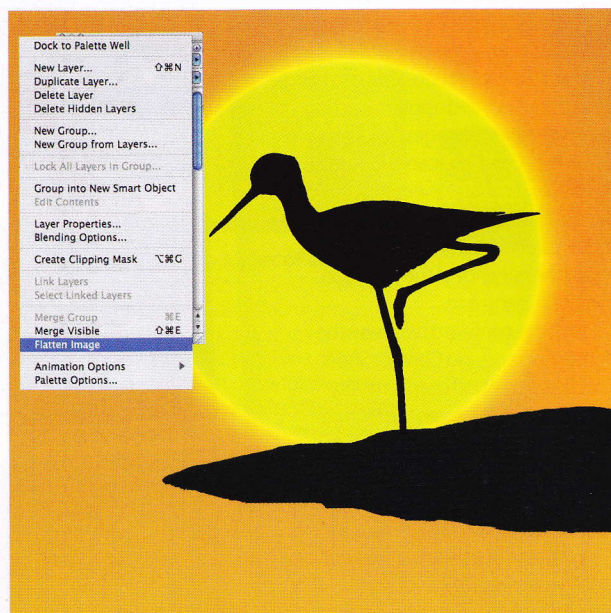


**14 Adjustments** If you have the Flaming Pear plug-in, go to Filter>Flaming Pear>Flood to bring up the dialog. First adjust the horizon line to match the image; it needs to be about the middle of the shoreline. Move the Horizon slider left or right until it brings the horizon in the preview box in the middle of your shoreline. Experiment with Offset and Attitude to see the effect. The Waves and Ripples sliders can be adjusted to create various reflection types.



**16 Darken the image** To look realistic, this area also needs to be darkened slightly. With the area still selected, use a Curves adjustment (Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Curves) or select the New Adjustment Layer icon in the Layers palette. With the dialog box now open, make a slight adjustment to darken the bottom the image. You're done!

**12 Adding a reflection** Once you've arranged the layers to suit your image, it's time to create a watery reflection. First flatten your image by going to Layers>Flatten Image.



## Layer structure

Behind the silhouette

