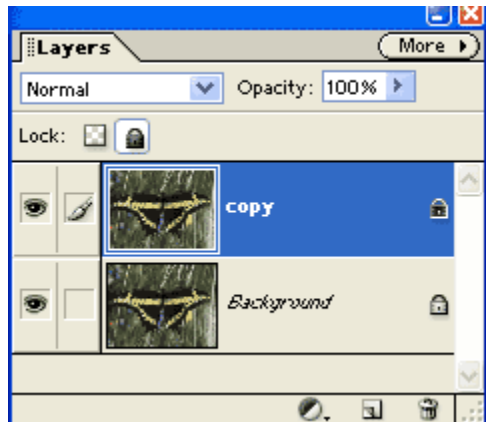


LAYER MASKS in PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS

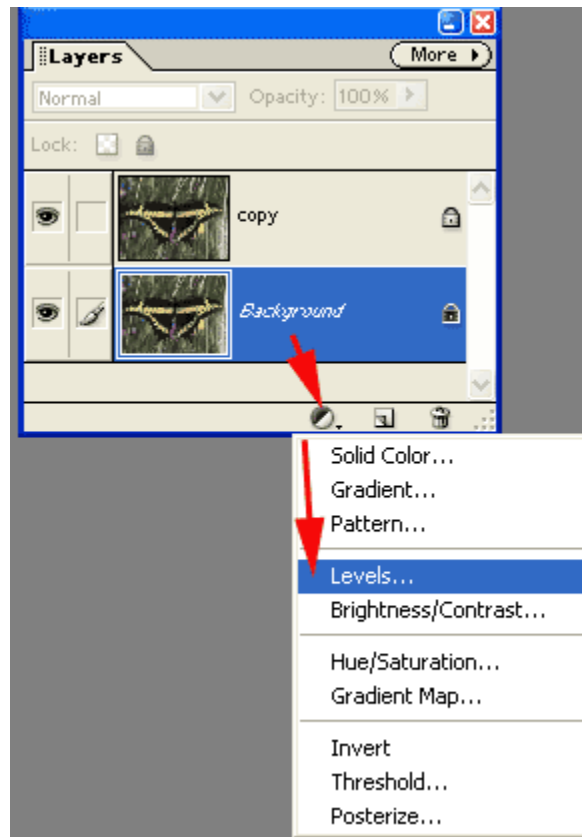
EXAMPLE #1 - DISGUIISING A BUSY BACKGROUND

This is a neat trick that will allow you the same control and creativity for masking images as you would have in the full version of Photoshop. This first tip is for altering a busy background. In this case, I'm changing the background to Black and White but you could apply a blur or any filter. ([Directions for compositing images is at the end of this tutorial](#))

1. Open an image and duplicate the background. I named my layer "copy". (Layer>New>Layer via Copy>)

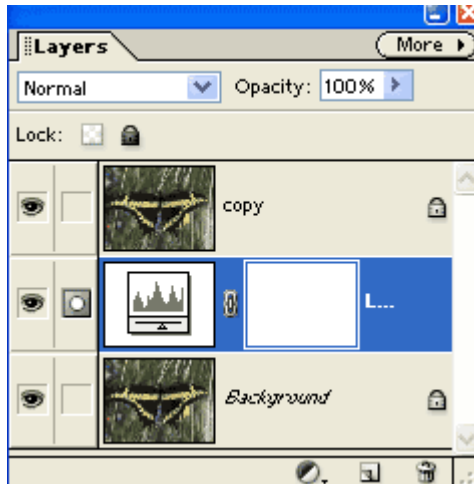


2. **Click on the Background Layer** and then click on the Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers Palette. Choose Levels.

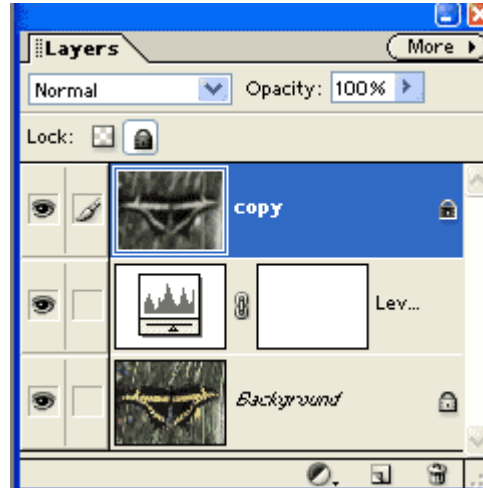


LAYER MASKS....continued

- When the Layers dialog box comes up **DO NOT apply any changes. Just click OK.** You will now see an Adjustment Layer with an attached MASK in between your two existing layers. If the adjustment layer appears at the top of the stack, it is because you didn't click on the background layer as directed in Step 2.

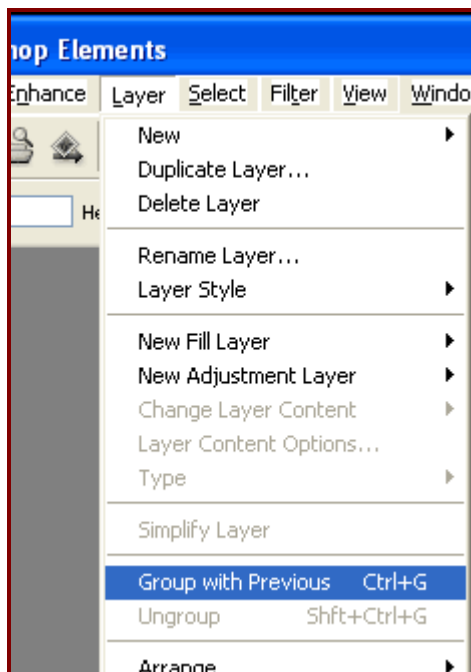


(Step 3)

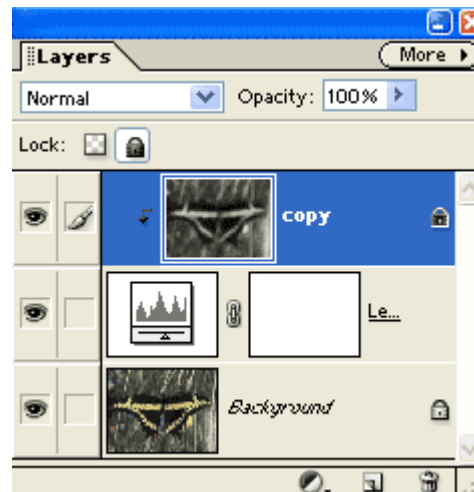


(Step 4)

- Now think about what you would like to do to the busy areas of your image. I want the distracting background to be black and white and have a shallow depth of field look. I **click on the top layer** and I clicked on "Image>Adjustments>Gradient Map" to make it Black and White. I then applied a blur. (You might want to apply an art filter, for instance) Don't worry that you've lost all detail in your image because of the blur or art filter you might have applied. (see above right)
- Make sure the top layer is still active. Go to the top tool bar and click on "Layer>Group with Previous" (Fig A). Note that the top layer has now "jumped" to the right slightly and has a little arrow that points down. (Fig B) The top image is now linked with the Mask.



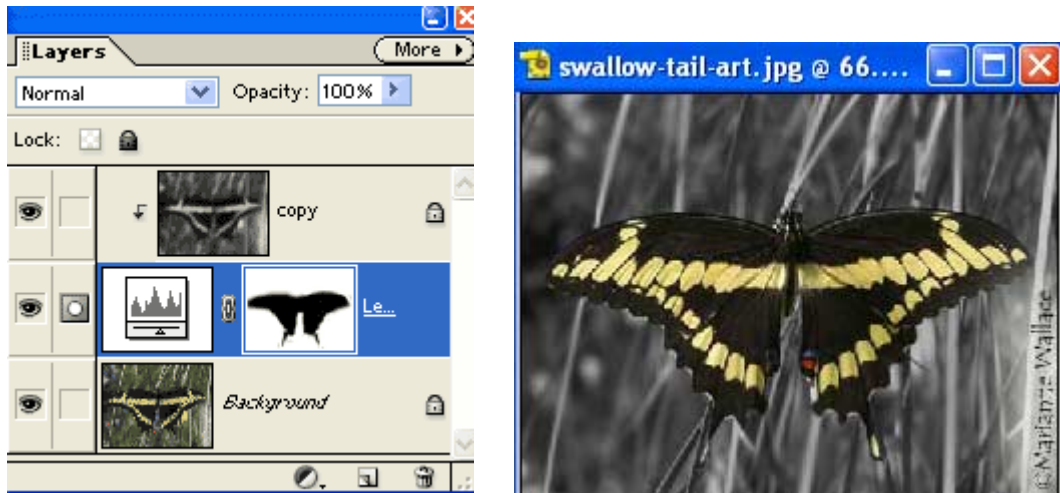
(Fig A)



(Fig B)

LAYER MASKS....continued

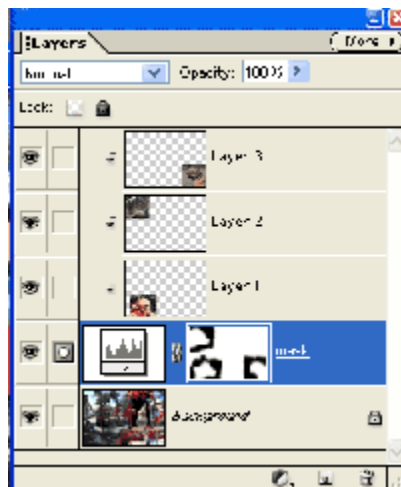
- Now comes the Magic part! Click on the Mask on the middle Layer. Note that the colors on the Tools Palette will automatically change to Black and White no matter what colors you had to begin with. This is because Black and White are the colors you use when working with masks. Choose Black and then choose a soft brush. Set the brush opacity to 100%. In my case, I want to remove the filter effects from the butterfly so with the mask active, I start painting over the butterfly. Like Magic, it reveals itself. If I make a mistake, I just switch my color to White and paint the filter effect back in! Keep switching back and forth between black and white until you have it perfect. Black will hide the effects; White will reveal the effects. Masks are a kind of "off/on" switch!



Final Image has black blurred background but the butterfly is in color.

EXAMPLE #2 - COMPOSITE IMAGES in PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS

- Open all the images you'd like to put together. Decide which one you would like as a background. (Or you could just create a blank document to start with). Add a Levels Adjustment Layer **as in Step 2 and 3 above**.
- Drag your first image (or a selection of a portion of another image) onto your main document and **follow step 5 above. Then repeat step 5 with every image or piece of image you bring in**. Use a soft brush on the Layer Mask to blend the images together. Remember that Black will hide areas of the images that you'd like to disappear. White will bring them back. Your Layer's Palette will look like this:



TIP: When blending images, set the opacity of your (SOFT) brush to 100% and go over the edges. Then, if you want an even softer transition, lower the opacity of your brush and go over the edge again and again until you get the a desired result. Remember to switch to White if you make a mistake. With White, you can paint back the areas that you didn't want to hide.