

## Using layers with Paint.NET software

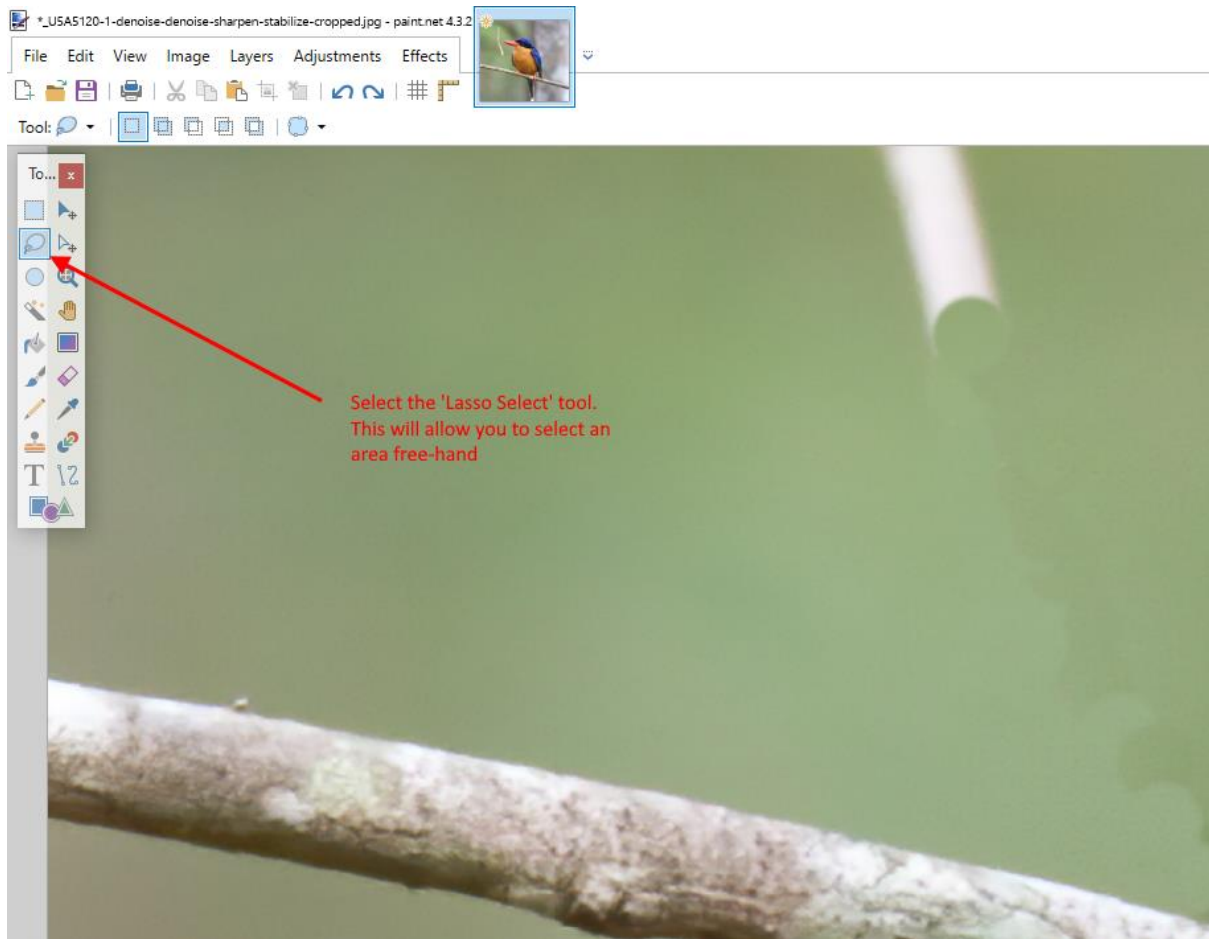
The previous tutorial (Basic image editing with Paint.NET software) was a basic overview of using the 'Clone Stamp' tool as a way of removing unwanted sticks and branches from an image, which is highly desirable if you are intending to print your own calendars or enter competitions where the removal of little sticks is allowed. However, this doesn't always give a 100% desired result, and at times there may be further editing required when zoomed in on an area where a branch was removed. Refer below (same image as previous tutorial):



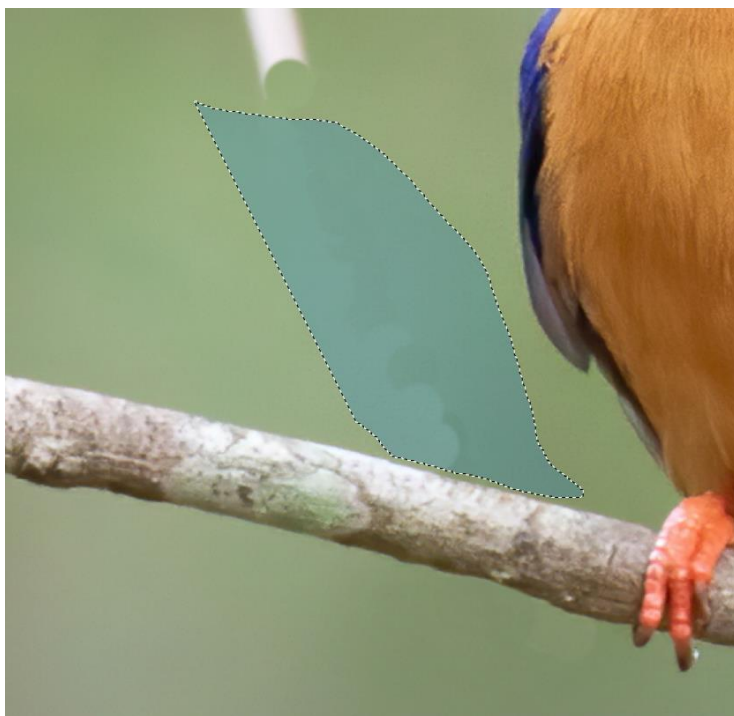
In the above example there are two different shades of background on either side of the stick. Although I used the left side of the background to 'clone stamp' the left side of the stick, and the right side of the background to 'clone stamp' the right side of the stick, ultimately the different background shades ended up creating a seam that now required further editing.

Although there are a couple of ways to go about fixing the above image, the cleanest and easiest way is via using layers – creating a new image over the top of the seam to cover it up. The next few pages will show how to do just that.

## Step #1.



## Step #2.



The shaded area to the left is the area which I have selected via using the 'Lasso Select' tool.

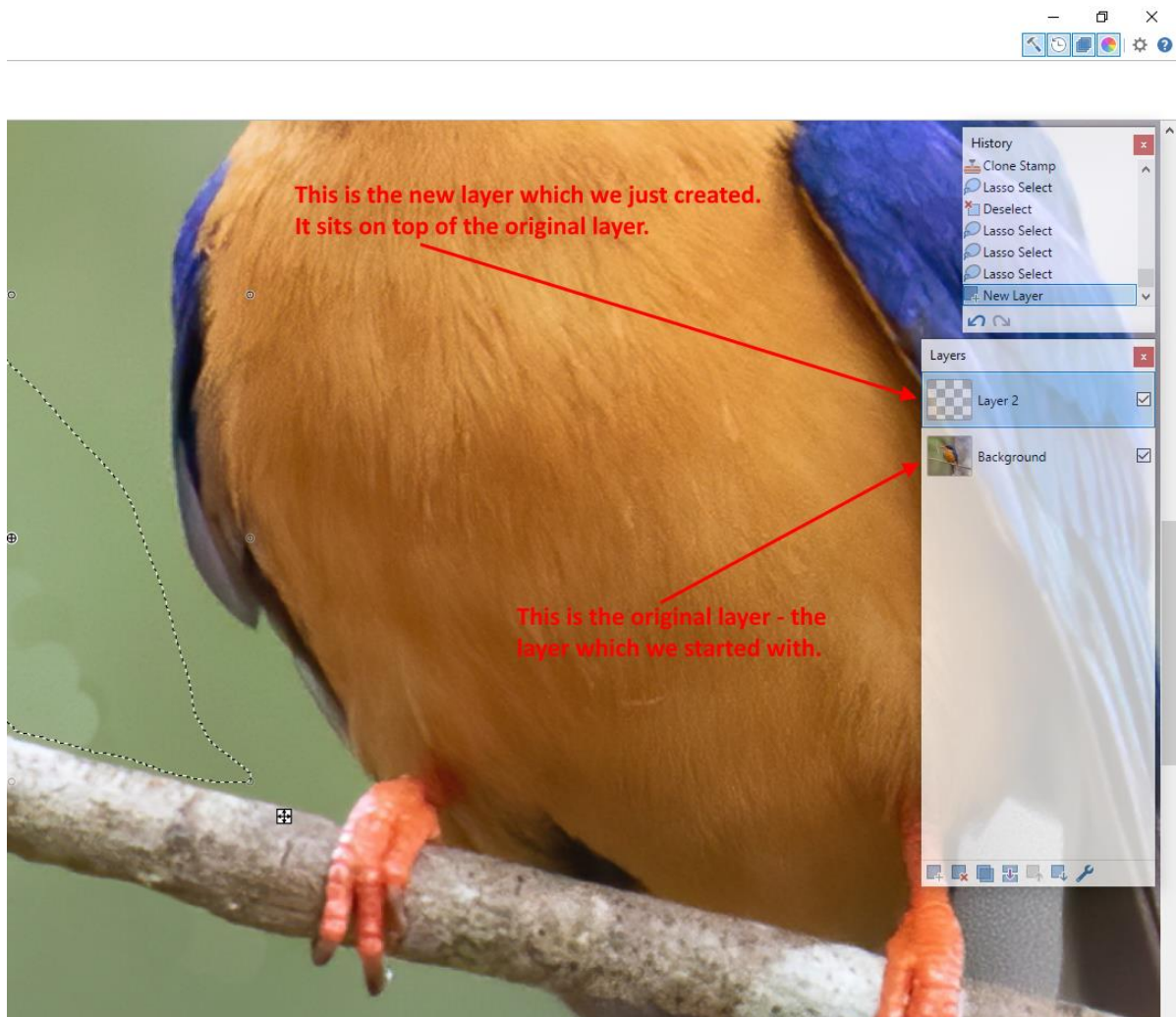
With the area shaded, now click 'Edit' from the menu and then select 'copy' from the panel that opens when you click 'Edit'.

You have now selected the area which is shaded. We will manipulate this area in an effort to remove the seam.

Now Click 'Layers' from the menu, and then click 'Add New Layer' to create a new Layer. This is where all of the magic will happen!

So what are Layers?

The easiest explanation is to take an image of a person's head on a piece of paper, and then imagine wanting to add a hat to that head. If you place an image of a hat on top of the image with a head, you have added something to the image without modifying it. This is how layers work in image editing software. They can work below and above, are a good way of what is referred to as 'non-destructive' editing.



You will notice in the above image that the new layer is shaded, indicating that it is the working layer (the selected layer). Anything that we do now will happen in that layer!

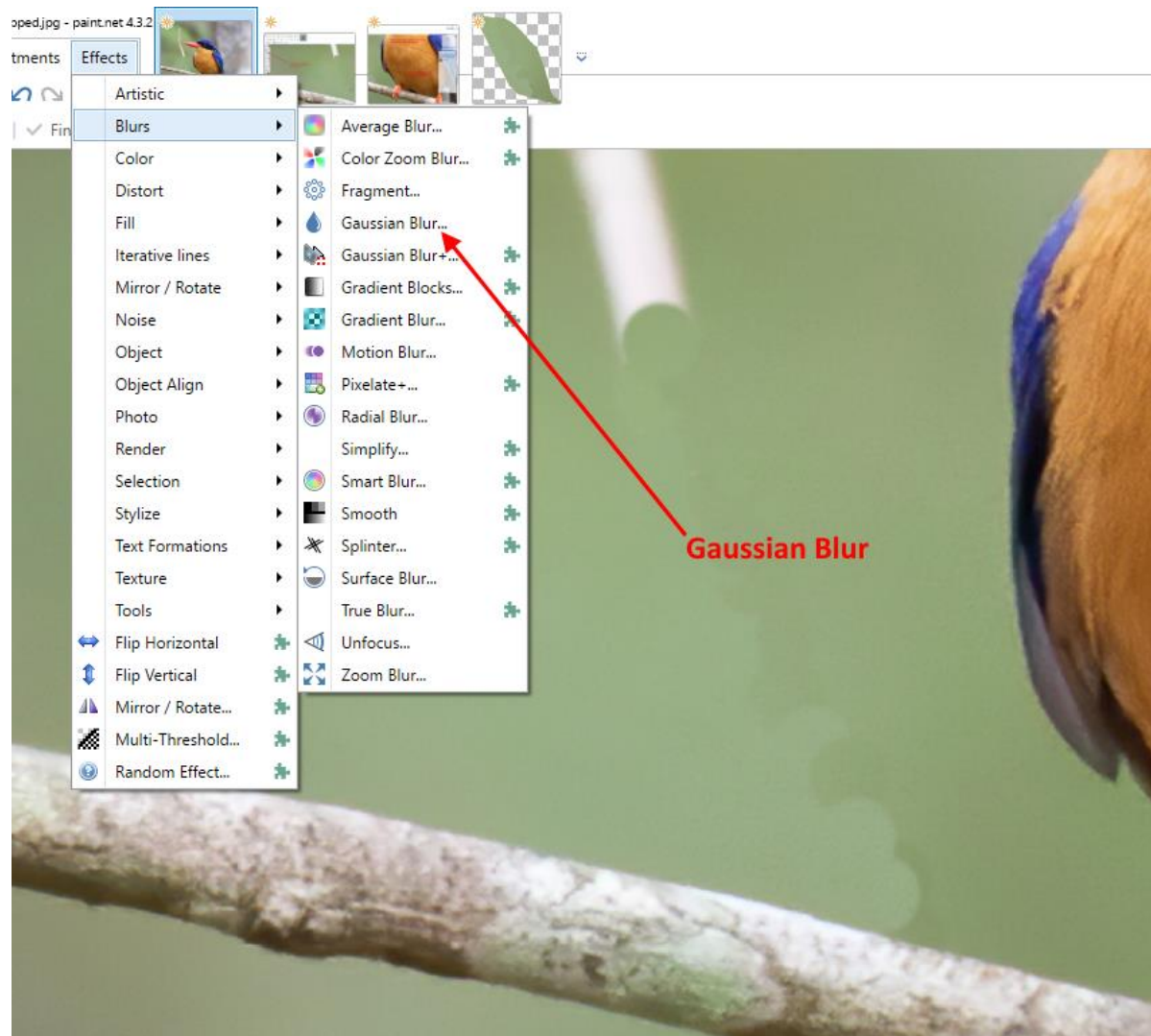
As we clicked 'copy' earlier on when we used the 'Lasso Select' tool on the original layer, that region of the image still remains selected and thus if we go up into the Menu and click on 'Edit' and then 'Paste' from the drop down menu, that portion of the image will be pasted into the new layer. It also still remains selected as noted by the dotted line, and thus by pressing the 'ESC' key we have now deselected that area. If it were to remain selected, then any changes that we make would only occur in that area which is not entirely desired.

Another quick tip when looking at the 'Layer Box' where 'Background' and 'Layer 2' can be seen – by selecting on one or the other with the mouse, you are in essence picking which layer you want to be

working in. By selecting and deselecting the 'ticks' in the small check boxes to the right of 'Background' and 'Layer 2', you can switch layer ON & OFF which makes it easier to visualise where you are working – spend the next couple of minutes having a play by switching between layers and turning layers ON & OFF by clicking the check boxes.

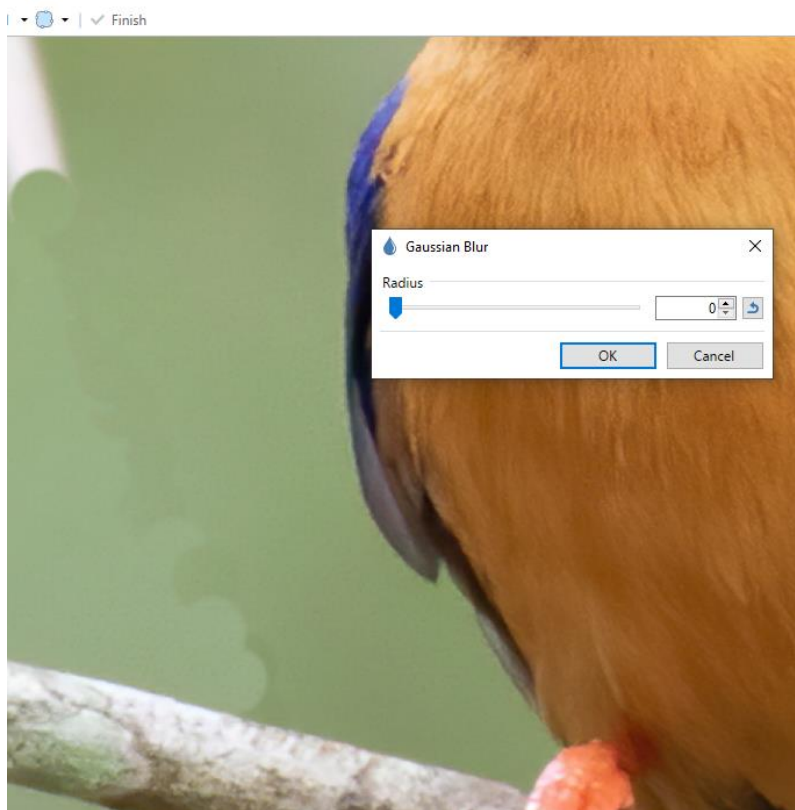
Once you are ready to move forward to the next part of this tutorial, ensure that both layers are ON by ensuring that both check boxes are ticked. Also, ensure that 'Layer 2' is selected, as this is where we will be working next.

We next want to go into the Menu again and select 'Effects', then 'Blurs' from the drop down menu, and 'Gaussian Blur' from the corresponding drop down Menu:

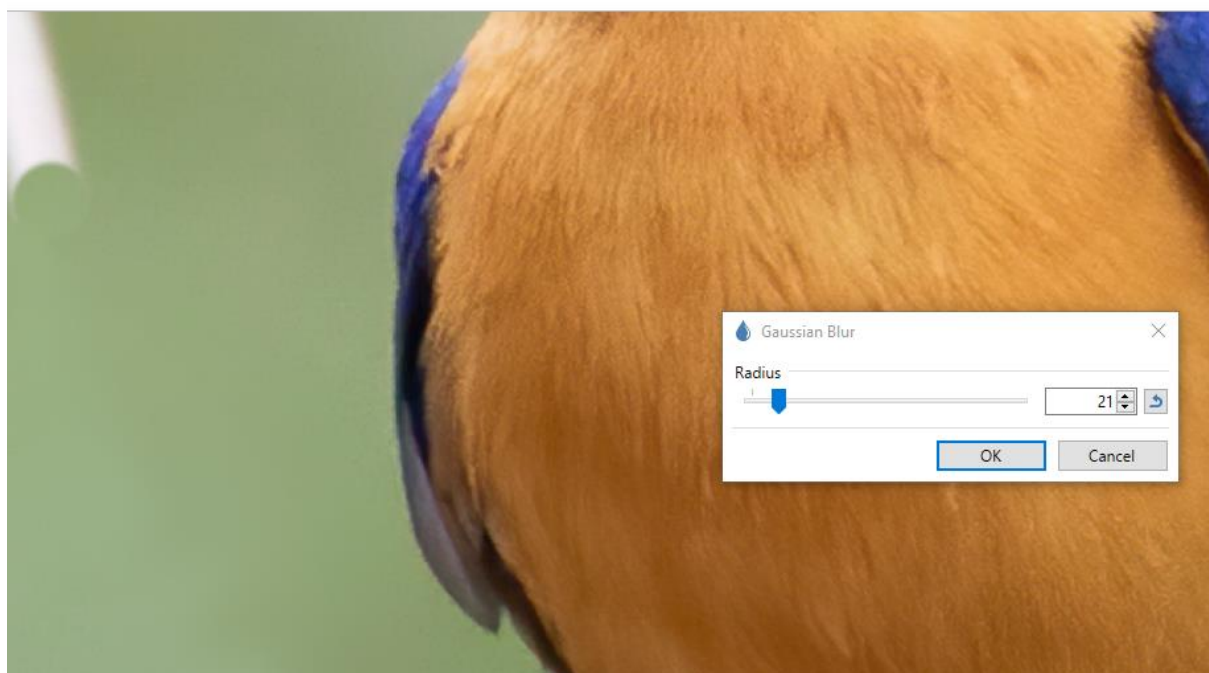


The Gaussian blur tool will blur the selected area which we have copied on to 'Layer 2', and this process will in turn remove the very obvious seam.

Once 'Gaussian Blur' is selected, the following window will open. By dragging the 'radius' slide bar the amount of blur will vary:



In the next image, I have dragged the slide bar to 21, which appeared to do a good job in blurring the seam. Refer to the next image:



It is important to note that by blurring a part of an image which remains unselected, the image has expanded (like a cloud) outside of the desired area. Yes, we deselected a selected area earlier which

confined the area which we copied, however, if we did not deselect that area then a new seam would have been created around the border of the selected area.

The below two images will give a good visual insight into what has resulted:

Before blur:

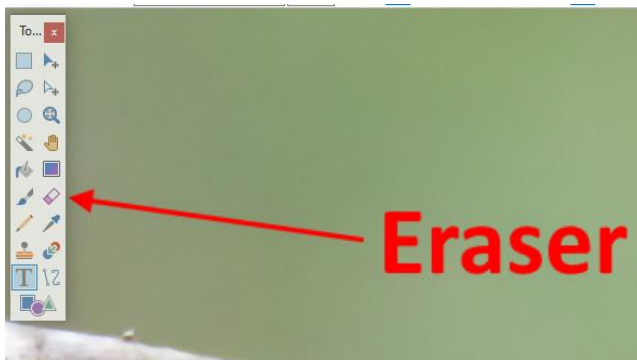


The branch is as originally photographed.

After blur:



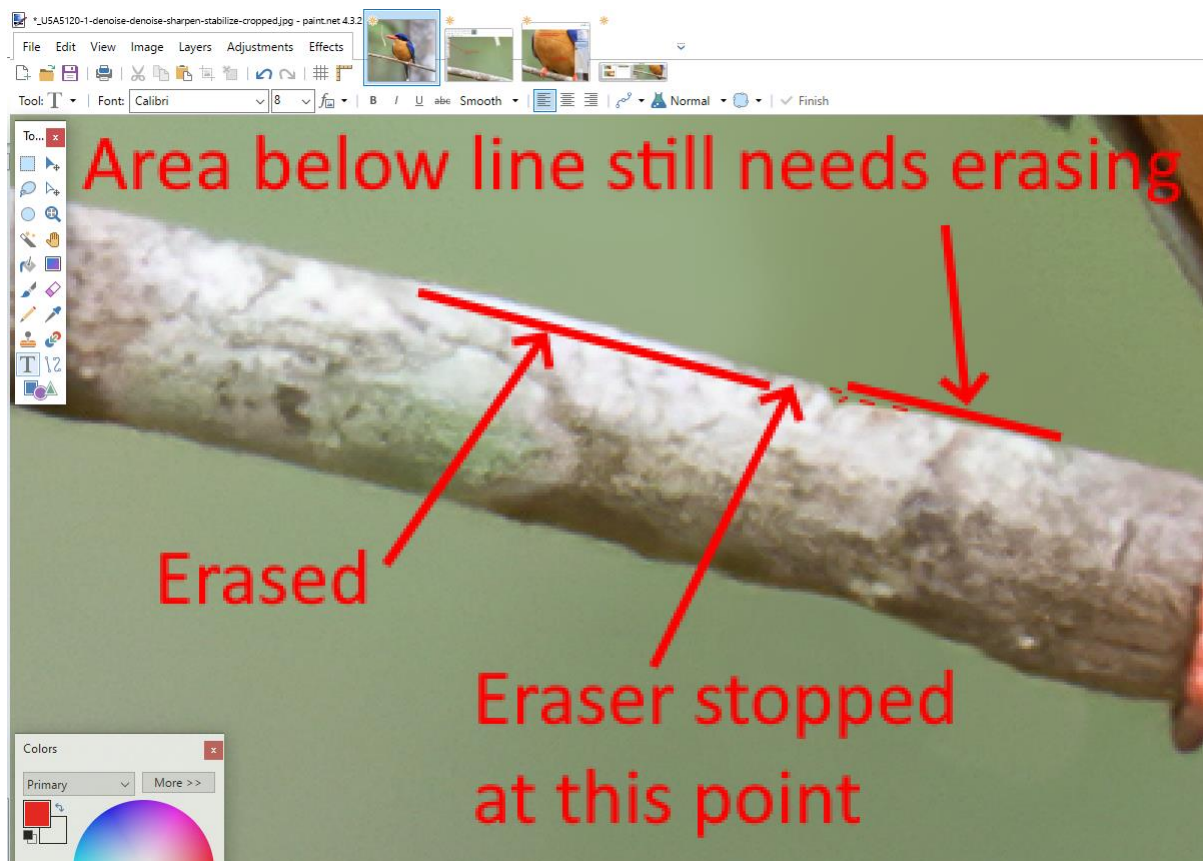
The branch has become tainted with some of the green background.



The 'Eraser' tool will now become our best friend. It is exactly as the name suggests, it is an eraser.

Ensure that 'Layer 2' remains selected, as this again is where all of the work will take place. And note that as with the 'Clone Stamp' tool, the width of the 'Eraser' can be adjusted by changing the size of the 'Brush Width'.

With the Eraser tool selected and Layer 2 selected as the 'working layer', start running the eraser over areas of the image where you did not want the blur to be – i.e. the branch which the bird is sitting on and portions of the bird which have also been obviously affected. I have increased my eraser brush size to 20 and zoomed in on an area to give a visual of what is actually being achieved through this process. Refer to next image.



Once completed and with Layer 2 selected, click on 'Merge Layer Down' as per the below image. This has now created one solid image yet again. If you are not happy with the end result, repeat the process. Once you become familiar with it, there are shortcuts which you will pick up on and that save you time, however as a first time I would advise on repeating the process until you become comfortable with it. Although it seems tedious right now, this whole process will take no more than 5 minutes once you have become comfortable with it!

Note - The most important part of the entire process is renaming the image – either save it as something else when you open the image initially (highly recommended), or do that now. Otherwise if you open an original image, make changes and click save you have in essence lost the original image!

Also, note that if you want to save an opened JPEG (as an example) with layers created in it, the image will default to save as a .pdn (paint.net) file. Once the layers are merged down, the image will only then save in the source image format.

The finished image (with time and patience) is on the next page!

