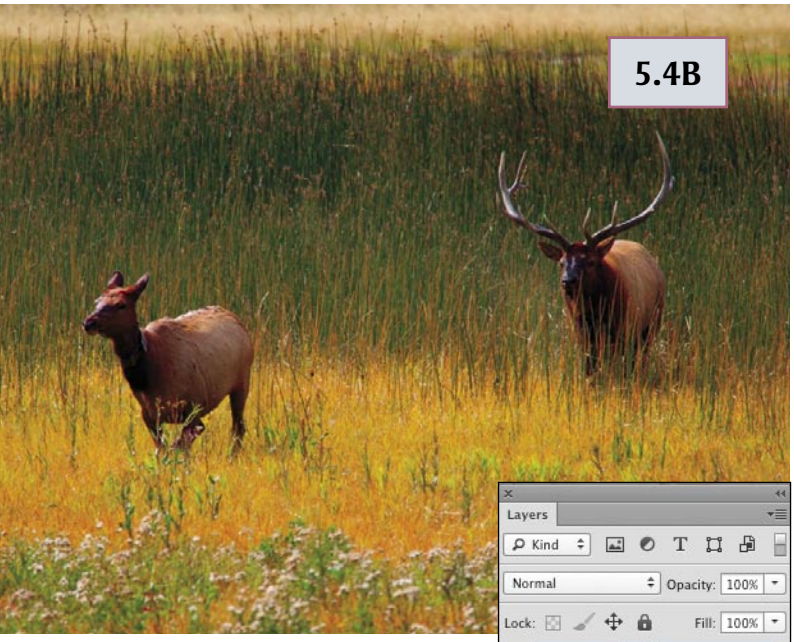
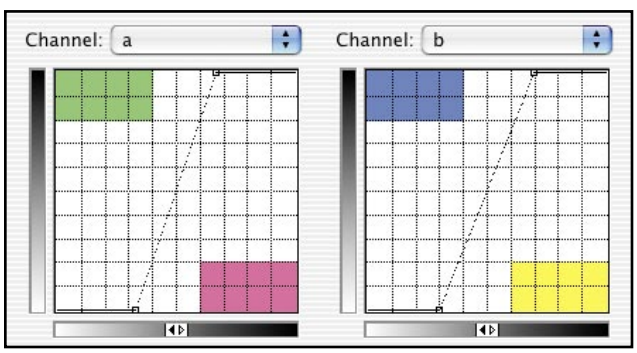


***Figure 5.4** Top, the original. Bottom, the action uses the curves below on the Color Boost layer. The Endpoint Adjustment layer's default curves don't change anything.*



- **Sharpening.** Almost all images benefit from some kind of sharpening. Everybody has different opinions of how best to do it. Mine appear in Chapter 15, but there is no reason not to use your own if you prefer.
- **Prepare for output.** This chapter will leave us in the LAB colorspace. When finished, presumably we will have to either return to RGB or move on to CMYK, as I had to for this book.

Of all these steps, you will probably agree that the quickest and easiest was the one that's the subject of this chapter. This correction took maybe two and a half minutes from start to finish. The opening color curves were more difficult than usual, so allot more than a minute for them. The luminosity step is also about a minute. But this last color boost should take five seconds.

It takes longer if you decide to cut back on color more selectively, often with layer masks. We will now explore what they are, and what goes on behind the scenes in the Color Boost action.

The Color Boost Action at Work

If you aren't familiar with how to write actions, it's worth a look. I will kill two birds with one stone by having you rewrite the Color Boost action, thus saving me the trouble of having to explain what's in it. A reminder: this action is supplied, so the following exercise is for practice only. To get started, a file must be open.

- **Window: Actions** to bring up the Actions palette. In its flyout, choose New Action. You will be prompted for a name and asked in which action set to put it. If you want a new action set, that's in the flyout, too. Anyway, when finished, click Record. Photoshop will now keep track of all your steps.
- **Image: Mode>Lab color.** LAB is the favored way to enhance color, usually producing a more attractive result than RGB.

- **Add a curves adjustment layer** and name it Color Boost. Apply the curves shown to the A and B channels. Note: if this were being done for real, you would have to be very, very careful with this step. Any imperfection will ruin the action. Fortunately the curves in the supplied action have been properly tested!
- **Change layer opacity to 75%**, more than enough for the average picture.
- **Add a second curves adjustment layer** and name it Endpoint Adjustment. When the curves dialog opens, just click OK. Thus, for the time being, this layer does nothing.
- **Click back into the Color Boost layer** to make it the active one.
- **Click the square Stop playing/recording** icon at the bottom of the Actions palette.

And you're done. These steps can now be repeated automatically on other files. Just highlight your action, and click the triangular Play Selection icon.

* * *

The following example shows what layer masking is all about. Please assume that somebody has given you a copy of the Color Boost action, which you propose to test. You don't get a guinea pig, but rather the pair of elk in Figure 5.4A. You play the action, getting Figure 5.4B for your pains.

LAB, like the PPW itself, keeps color and contrast separate. You were introduced to LAB's strange numbering system back in Chapter 3. A brief review won't hurt.

The A and B are opponent-color channels containing no information about lightness. Where the A is light, it contributes magenta, where dark, green. If the A is a 50% gray it contributes no color. The further away from 50% gray, the more intense the color. So, the strongly magenta flowers back in Figure 4.2 were very light in the A. The elk in Figure 5.4A are somewhat light, because they are only slightly more magenta than green. And the fields are somewhat darker than 50%, being a bit more green than magenta.

The B is the same idea. Light parts of the channel represent yellow, dark ones blue. 50% gray is neither. All of Figure 5.4A is lighter than 50% gray in the B because every part of the picture is more yellow than it is blue.

As you recall, the numbering system uses a zero rather than the awkward *50% gray.*

Chapter Goals and Recap

This chapter boosts color. Also, there is a final opportunity to adjust contrast, if needed.

The method applies an action intended to produce excessive color. We then make an intelligent decision on how to cut back. We can simply reduce the opacity of the Color Boost layer, or load a layer mask.

How Difficult Is It? Easy, because the decision is one of personal taste. The first half of the chapter shows only two ways to reduce the color. It gets modestly more complex in the second half as we consider obscure possibilities for the layer mask.

How Often Is It Needed? In this workflow almost every image needs some kind of color boost. A second layer that finalizes contrast is often used to adjust endpoints, but not on every file.

Note: experienced PPW panel users prefer Color Boost as a combined action that adds the Modern Man from Mars method shown in the next chapter. However, each action can also play individually.

The PPW Takes Shape

COLOR
- Kill incorrect color with RGB curves (Chapter 3).
- Identify highlight (Chapters 3–4).

CONTRAST
- Channel blending on luminosity layer (Chapter 4).
- Contrast-enhancing curves (Chapter 4).

COLOR AGAIN
- Apply Color Boost (this chapter).
- Finalize contrast, including endpoints.
- Reduce color by masking or opacity adjustment.

SHARPEN

FINALIZE
- Consider blend with another version (Chapter 2).
- Convert to final output space, if needed.