Using the Lightroom Dehaze tool on Safari Images

Description

Adobe has released a new version of Lightroom CC which contains a new adjustment tool: The DeHaze slider. It is found in the FX menu of the Development module (way down toward the bottom of the list).

You must have the CC version of Lightroom to use it, but if you have Photoshop, there is a way to access the tool and take it further using a few medium/advanced PS techniques. (see at the end of this article for details). Also this tool works on the entire image â€“ in Photoshop you can target the area where the effect takes place.

The purpose of the Dehaze slider is to either add or remove atmospheric haze from a photo. In Adobeâ€™s words:â€œThe Dehaze technology is based on a physical model of how light is transmitted, and it tries to estimate light that is lost due to absorption and scattering through the atmosphere.â€• The obvious use is for adjusting landscape images, but I have found it useful with safari images where there was quite a bit of dust in the air and even for some underwater images where the water was not clear. (the underwater equivalent of dust)

Using Dehaze with an Underwater Image

For me, it is a tool that combines Contrast, color saturation, and midtone sharpening into a single tool. Using a combination of tools it is possible to achieve similar results to the Dehaze slider, but if time is an issue, you can get great improvements with just one adjustment. Investing a bit more time you can build on the improvements Dehaze adds to your images by combining it with further adjustment tools.

Here is an example of how I used Dehaze for an image that was not a landscape.
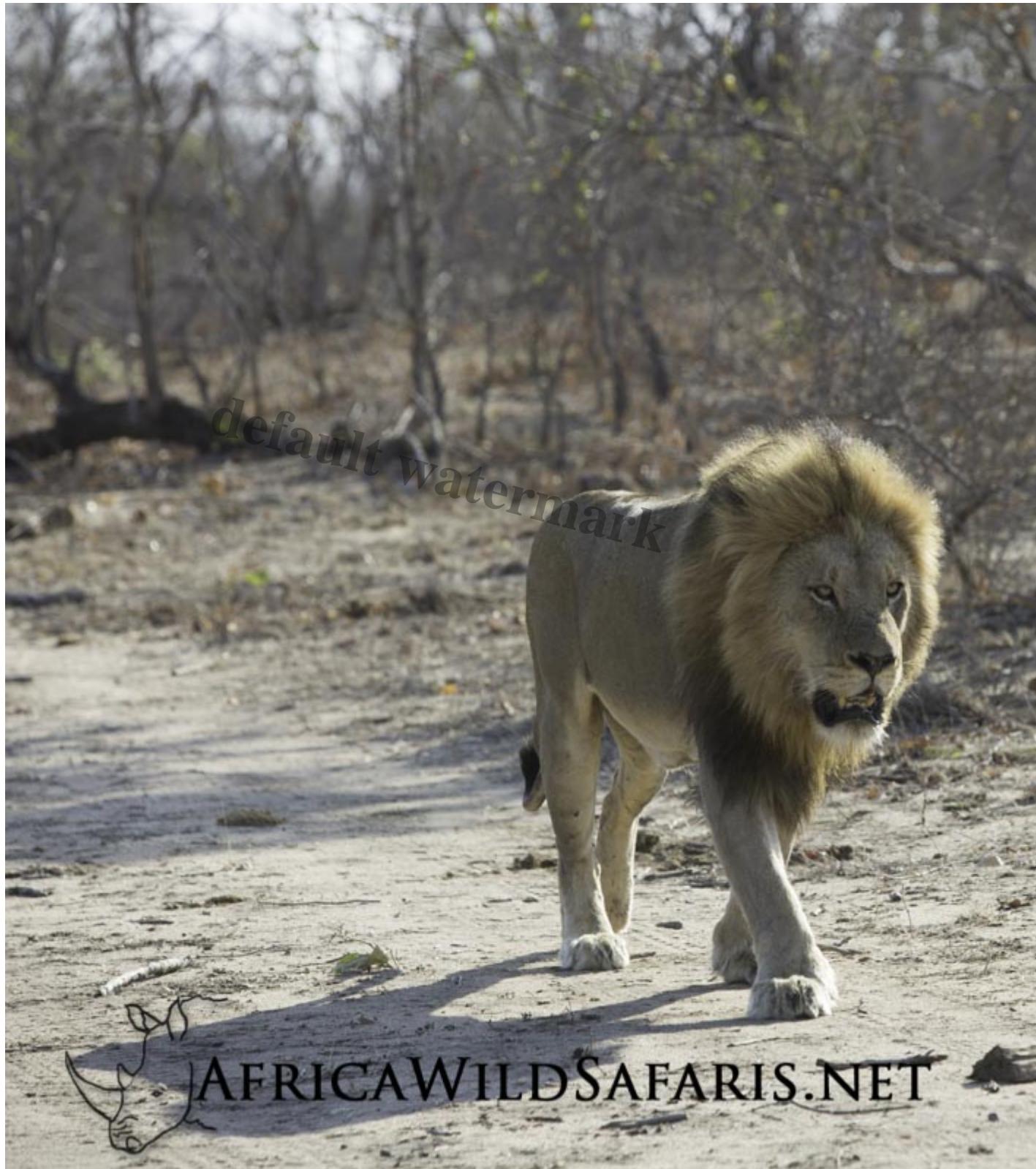
The dry, dusty air makes this image lack contrast.

The drought has made everything very dusty and it really effects this image taken in the mid morning light.

The image with just a Dehaze adjustment

With just one adjustment, the colors pop and the contrast is greatly improved.

Now I experiment with doing some Exposure adjustments first before applying the Dehaze.

My method for this is to temporarily Desaturate the image so I can analyze it without the distraction of color.
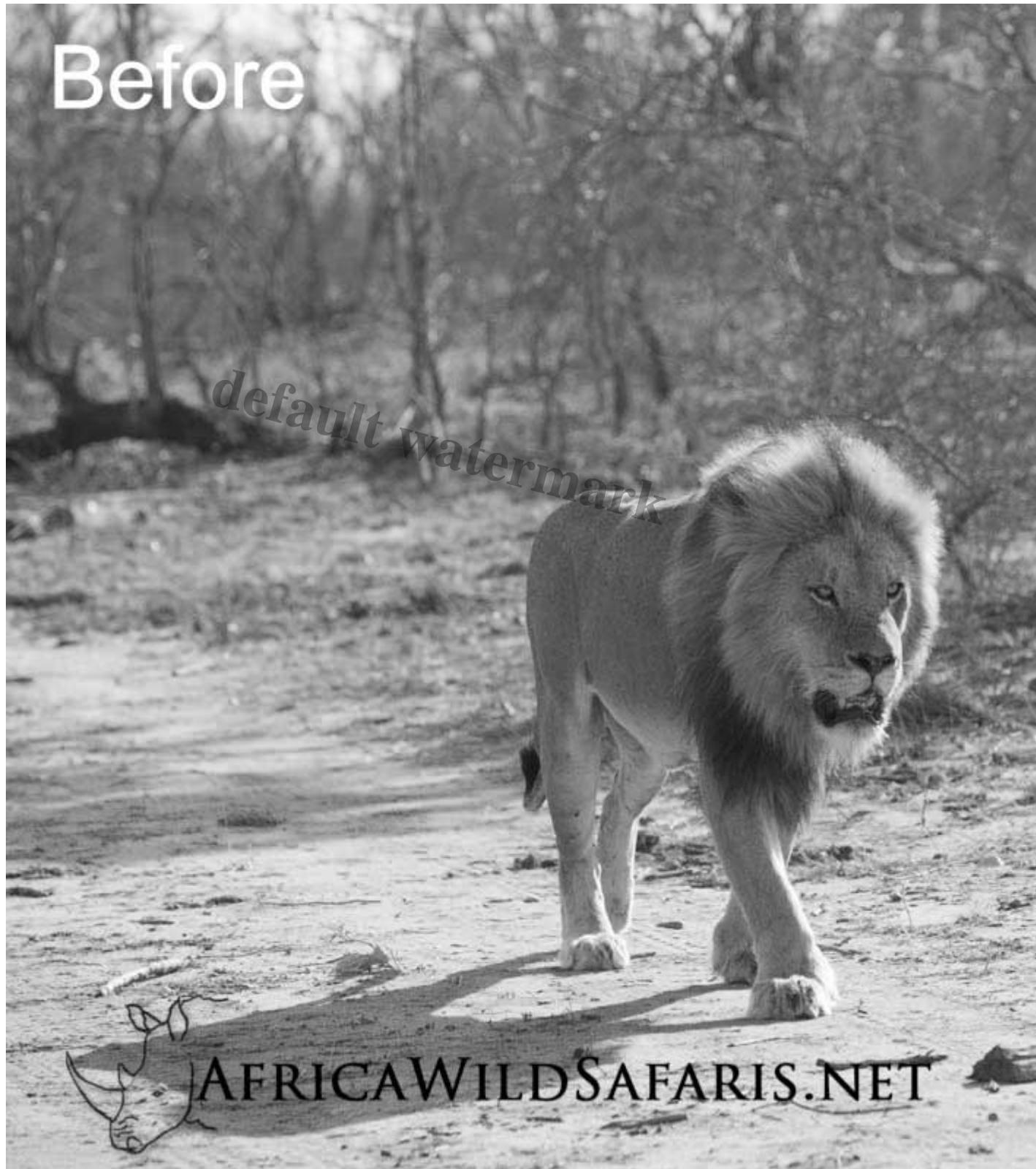

The unadjusted image temporarily desaturated so I can adjust exposure

I used the Tone Curve tool (you can also use the 4 sliders under Exposure) to add contrast by darkening the Shadows and Darks and lightening the Lights. I left the Highlights as they were since there is a bit of bright light in the mane and sky. I then restored the color to see the following improvement.


Image with exposure adjustments

Now I add the Dehaze adjustment â€" a little bit less than I used when it was my only adjustment.
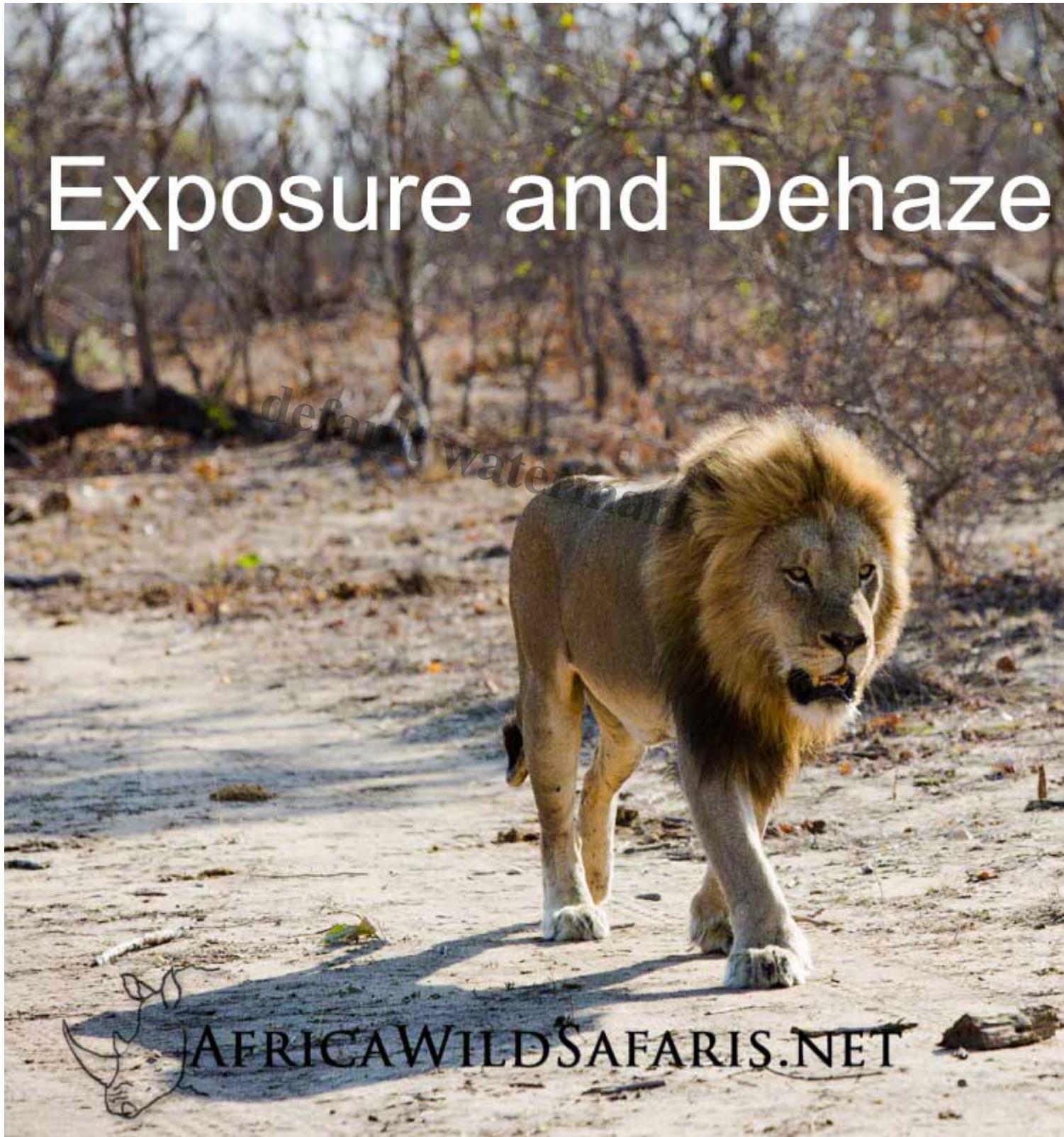
Dehaze has taken the image a step better than exposure adjustments alone.

Footer Tagline

Looking at the results in detail, I want to bring some lightening back to the Shadows range of the midtones. I go to my Darks slider in the Tone Curve tool (or the Shadows in the Exposure section) to lighten these tones up. I can now see the details in the lion's face better.
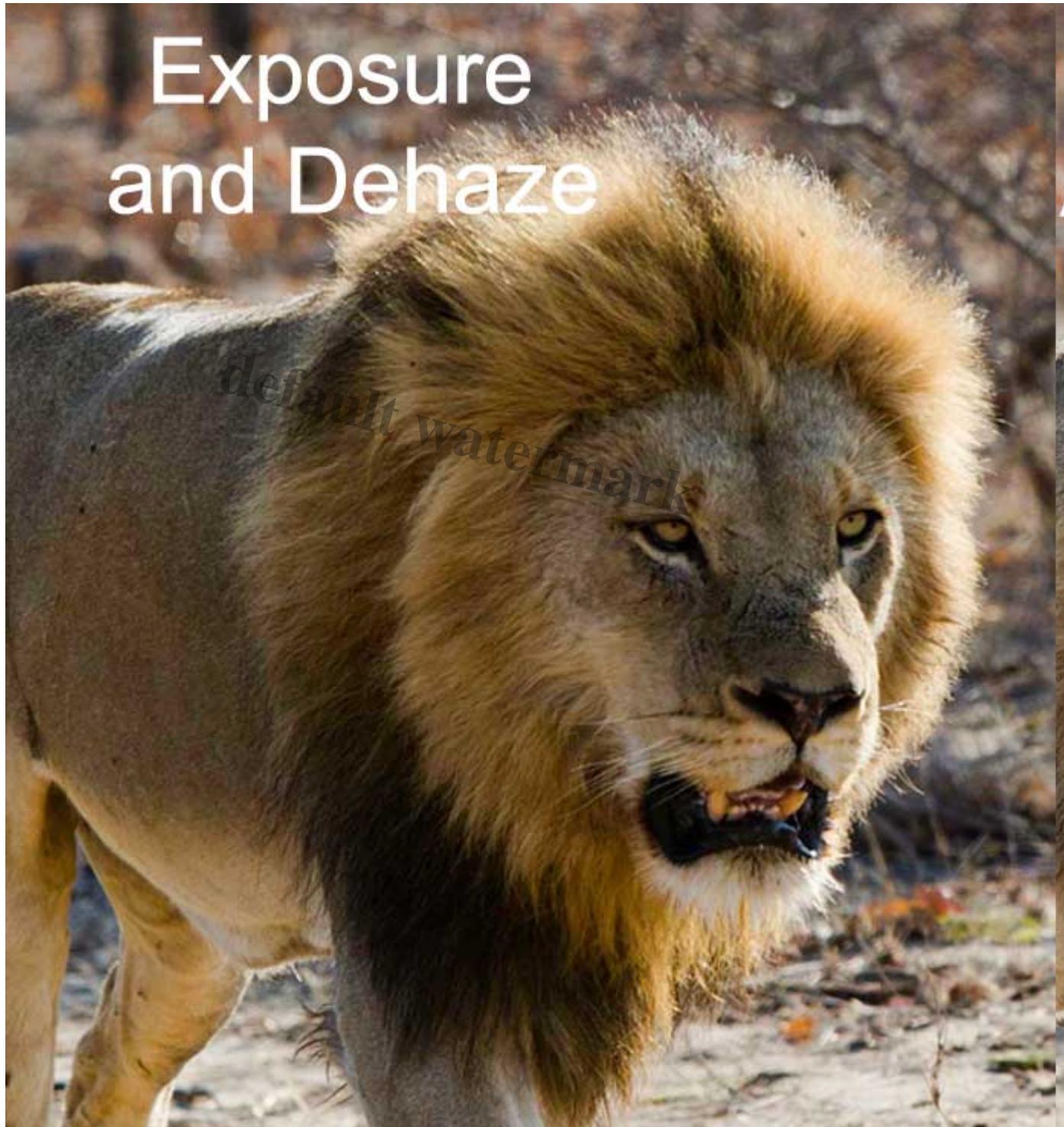
After the exposure and dehaze adjustment, I back off of the Shadows adjustment to bring light back

Now my image is acceptable or I can add details such as small color adjustments (to saturation or hue) or some targeted sharpening or highlighting on places like the eyes.

Here are a few other images with a simple Dehaze adjustment.

Image out of the camera

The image after a small Dehaze adjustment
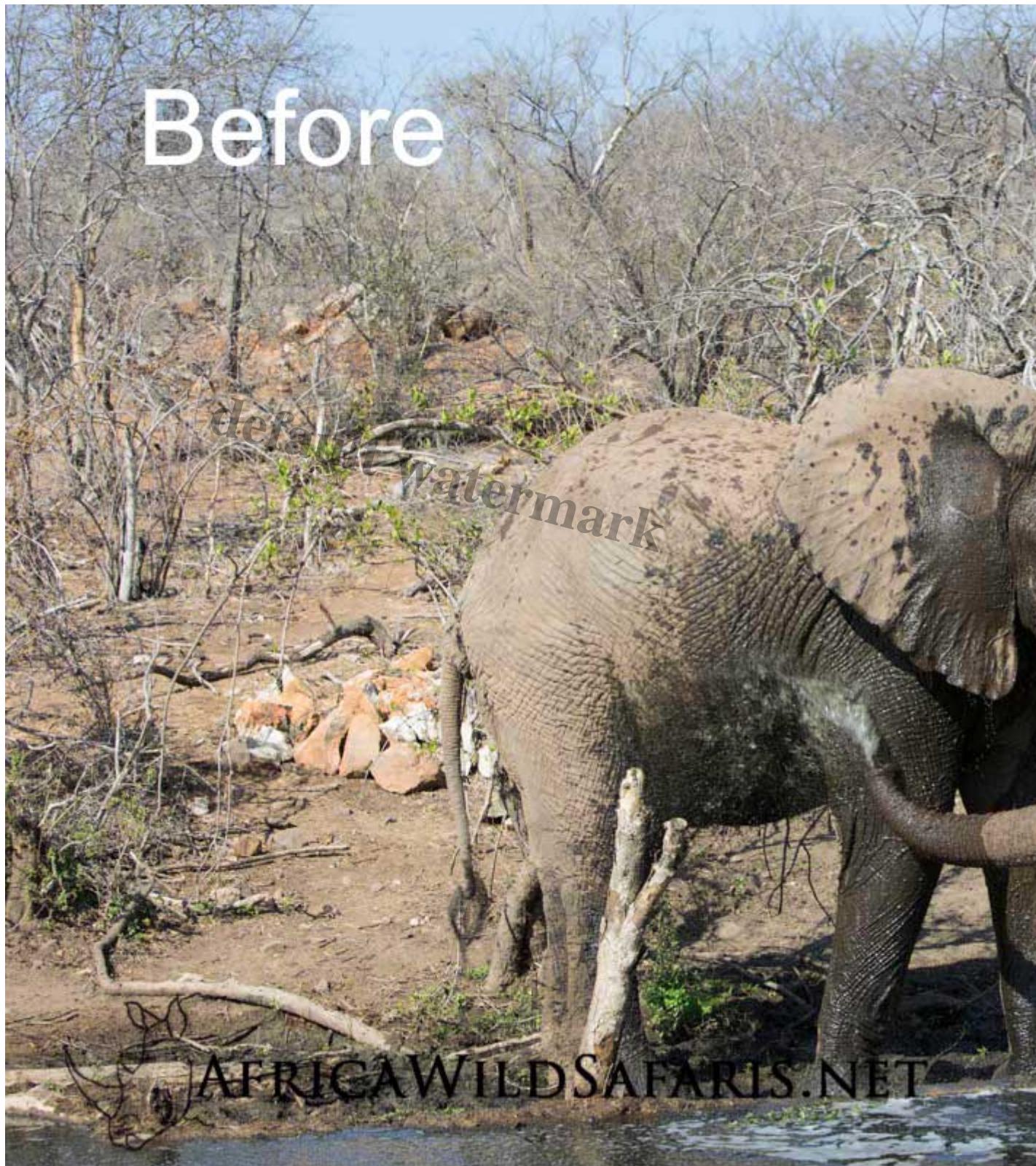
Image with no adjustments

Footer Tagline
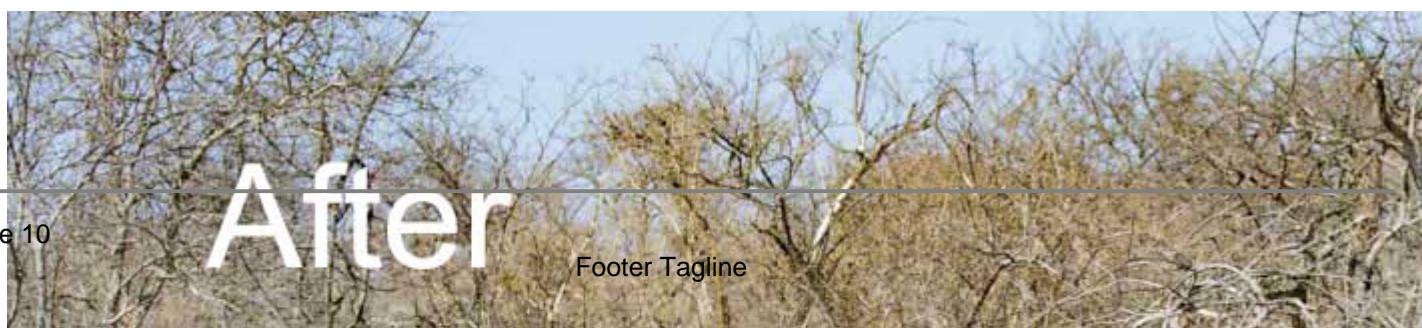
Image after a Dehaze adjustment

For those without Lightroom CC who have Photoshop or those who take the technique further with more targeted results:

Open the image in Photoshop.

Make a duplicate of the background layer.

Go to the Filter Menu and find Camera Raw Filter

Dehaze appears under the FX tab

Make your adjustments and choose OK to return to Photoshop.

Now you will make a Layer Mask which will hide the effect where you do not want it. â€" in my example I will mute the effect in the background.

Add the layer mask to the layer which has the Camera Raw Filter adjustments. Use a paintbrush and black color to mask out the effect.   You can soften your brush and/or lower the opacity at the transition points.
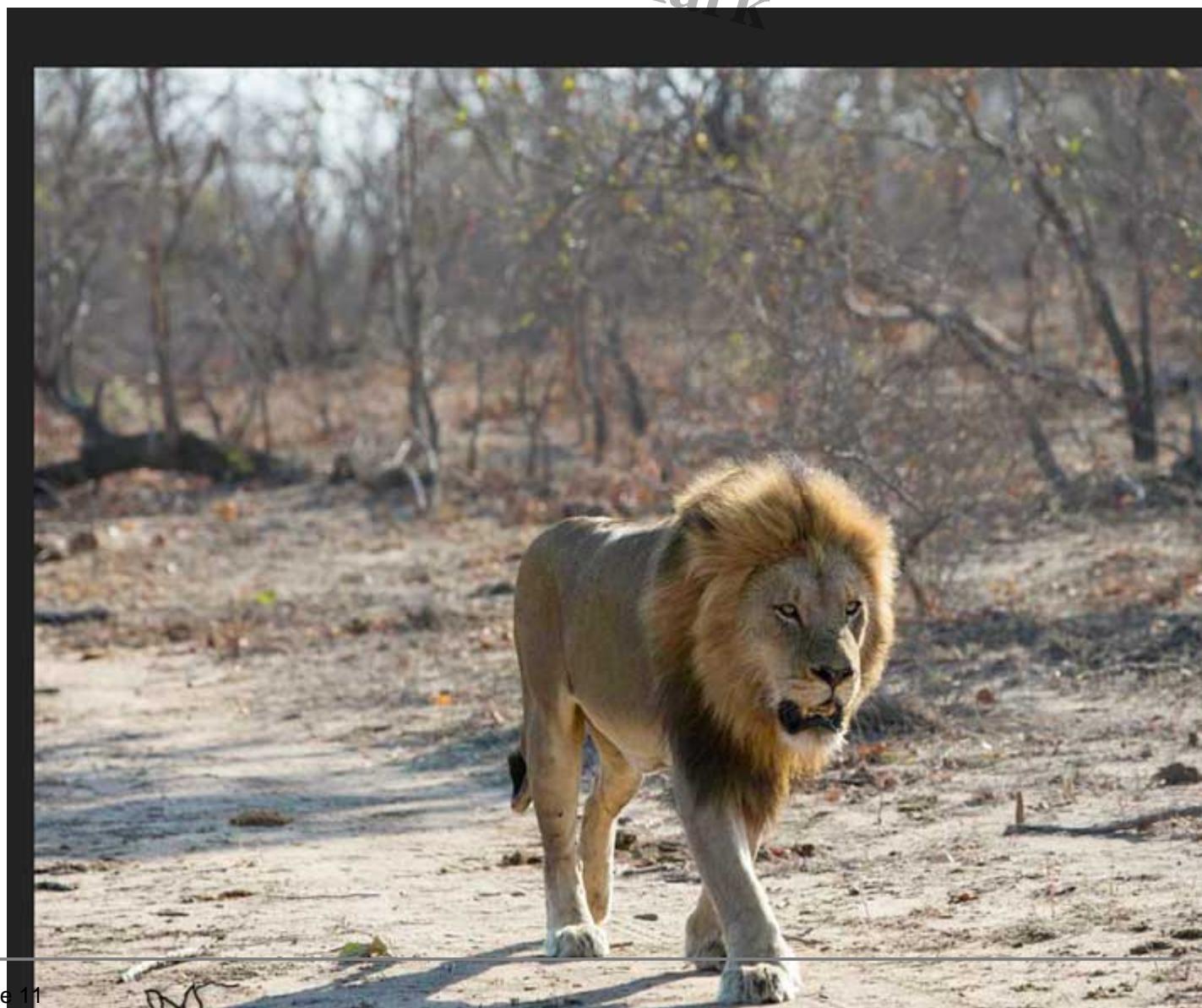
limiting the Dehaze effect to just the foreground and not the background

If I had turned my copied layer into a Smart Object, I would be able to return to the Camera Raw adjustments and amend them as I wish.

The Dehaze tool is now my go to tool for images that need contrast boost â€" especially if it was taken in dusty conditions.

Check out more of my Post Processing Techniques.

Using Shadows Highlights tool to add contrast

Category

1. Creating Photo Stories
2. Photography on Safari
3. Safari Camera Techniques

Tags

1. Adobe lightroom Dehaze
2. lightroom for safari images
3. post processing safari images
4. safari post processing techniques

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