

# KENYAN LIGHT

A First-Glimpse Monograph

DAVID DUCHEMIN

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I have been spending most Januaries in Kenya for the last 10 years or so, after a chance phone call from a friend of a friend. “How would you like to guide safaris in Kenya?” he said, and I started packing my bags. Since then, it has been my privilege to introduce this astonishing place to photographers from all over the world. My own time here, on safari and multiple assignments for humanitarian NGOs, has deepened my love for the land and those who live on it, and for the light that makes this country such a draw for photographers.

The images here were made with the capable and dedicated help of guides from Emakoko Lodge in Nairobi National Park, Porini Lion Camp and Mahali Mzuri on the Maasai Mara, and Elsa’s Kopje in Meru National Park. They have my thanks for showing me the places and creatures they love and protect.

This short monograph is a first glimpse at my new work (in this case, photographs made in January 2020) and is created exclusively for you, the people in my global community who so patiently allow me to teach and inspire you. Your support means the world to me and is largely responsible for getting me to the astonishing places I photograph. I’m so grateful for that. I hope you find some inspiration in these pages.

Asante sana! (Thank you!)

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'd' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that ends in a small upward flick.

David duChemin  
February 2020

























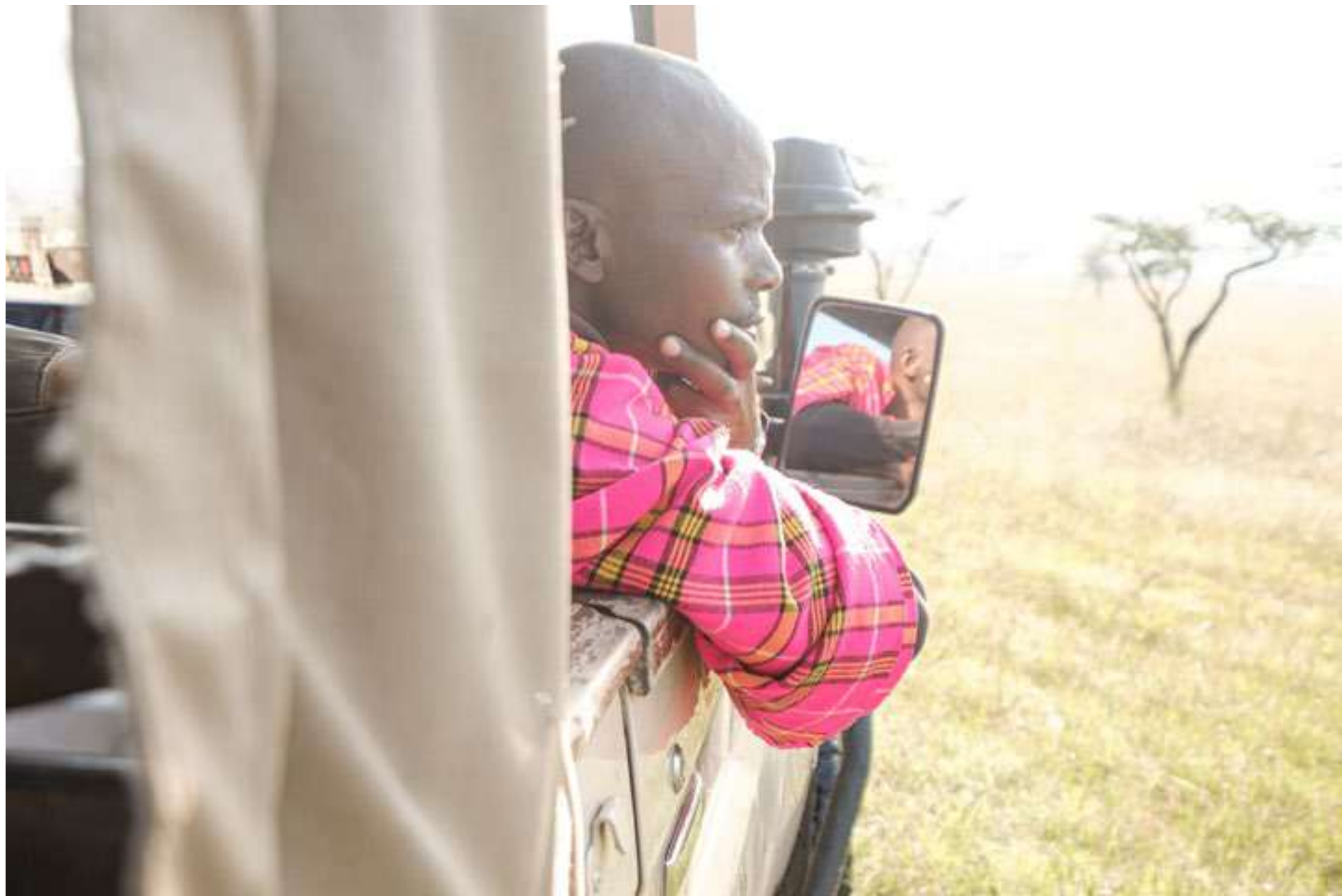










































The images in this monograph represent my latest additions to a larger body of work, a series of images made over the last 10 years or so. I suspect at some point they'll become a book, a collection of photographs that explore my own encounters of wildness in a place that I find nearly impossible to put into words. I've tried, but stumbled. The closest I've come is the idea of alchemy, the ancient idea of combining common materials and from them making gold. One of those materials in Kenya is light.

When I think about my time in Kenya, those early morning and late afternoon game drives, looking for lions and leopards and whatever other wonderful creature wanders across my path, I think of course about the animals themselves, but

also about the light. Kenya is luminous. The grasslands seem to glow from within. It's this luminosity I try to put into my images, seeking backlit scenes and preferring the golden colour palettes to the brighter greens, even when that means pulling those greens back a little with tools like Adobe Lightroom, lowering the saturation and warming them to match the experience of these warm and luminous moments.

To satisfy the technically curious, the images both in this short collection and the fuller portfolio were all made with two well-beaten Fujifilm XT-2 cameras and three lenses: the 18-55mm, 100-400mm, and mostly, the newer Fujinon200/2.0 lens, often with it's 1.4x convertor (this combination is roughly a 450/2.8

lens in 35mm equivalency). The look of many of the images—lions partly hidden behind blurred grasses or leaves, for example—is due to the shallow depth of field gained when shooting wide open at f/2.0 or f/2.8. It also comes from the very low point of view I was able to achieve, usually hanging over the side of the Land Rover and holding on to the inverted tripod foot, composing with the help of the flip-out LCD screen and often trying desperately to focus manually in order to avoid the grasses that autofocus tends to latch onto, rather than the eye of a lion.

Of course it is things like the low POV and the patience to wait it out, work through countless compositions, and edit out the very best moments

that have more to do with the final image than the brand of camera. Wildlife photography requires a great deal of patience: waiting for the light, waiting for the animals, waiting for the right moment. It has a high failure rate, too, which means a little patience with the photographer also goes a long way.

For those who look at images like these and think what lucky shots they are, you're right. Very lucky. I spent three weeks on safari, came home with just shy of 18,000 images, of which I suspect 36 might be worthwhile. Ask me in a year and that number will be smaller. But luck is only a matter of what happens, if it happens at all, and when. It's a matter of being there, which we control in the sense that we put in the

time. It is also a matter of giving ourselves the best chance at success. For me, this means shooting most of the scenes unfolding before me in high-speed continuous burst mode, usually 8 frames per second. This does a couple things, the first being obvious: it results in many more frames, increasing the chance that the gestures are just right, the birds flying in the right part of the frame, or all the animals in the frame looking in one particular direction, for example.

But it also gives us the best chance at sharp images. Shooting with longer lenses can dramatically amplify any camera shake or movement, and shooting in a burst can often give us sharper images in the middle of that burst than the first and last frames that sometimes get a

little blurry from the press and release of the shutter.

I hope these short insights are helpful to you. I think by far the most important element in making images that move you is to be madly in love with your subject, to be restless about finding the magic, the poetry, or whatever it is that draws you to it. This applies no matter what the discipline, and while it doesn't replace the need to know your craft, it gives you the joy and the motivation to put in the time and find ways to best express that magic.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'David duChemin', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

*David duChemin*  
*Vancouver Island, 2020*



*David duChemin* is a Canadian photographer based on Vancouver Island, but at home on any of this planet's seven astonishing continents. He divides his attention between creating images of hope for advocacy and fundraising projects for the international humanitarian and NGO community, and pursuing personal work in wild places.

A passionate advocate of the photographic arts, David is the author of several books, including *Within The Frame*, *The Soul of the Camera*, and *The Heart of the Photograph* (2020.)

David's work can be found online at [DavidduChemin.com](http://DavidduChemin.com), his books can be found on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com), and his podcast about the creative life, A Beautiful Anarchy, can be found on iTunes, or at [aBeautifulAnarchy.com](http://aBeautifulAnarchy.com).

