

WINDSURFING PHOTOGRAPHY PART 3:

EDITING

WORDS: SIMON WINKLEY
PHOTOS: ALEX IRWIN,
 SIMON WINKLEY, BEN LUCKETT
 & LISA KUHN

IN THE PRE-DIGITAL LATE 1990s,
CELEBRATED PHOTOGRAPHER
JIM BRANDENBURG SPENT 90
DAYS TAKING WILDLIFE PHOTOS
IN ELY, MINNESOTA - STRICTLY

REGULATING HIMSELF TO ONE SINGLE PRESS OF THE SHUTTER RELEASE BUTTON PER DAY, EVERY DAY WITH NO DISCARDS, NO SECOND CHANCES AND NO EDITING OF THE RESULTS. Some days saw him slogging through his local forest for hours on end - wet, cold and tired - straining to decide upon the day's singular subject. By the end, he had successfully produced 90 perfectly composed photos which were published by *National Geographic* in November 1997 in the article *North Woods Journal*.

Thankfully we have little need to apply such precision to our photography in an age where the standard is to take an excess of photos, select the best ones then edit them until we like the way they look. Whether it's a slight tweaking of colour tones, a levelling of a horizon or a full-blown assault on the whole photo, even the best photographers edit their images. That's what I'm looking at this time in the final article in the series, which has so far covered the use of action cameras and DSLRs in windsurfing. I will be proposing an eclectic yet accessible range of options to enable you to alter and enhance your windsurfing images so you can print, post and publish them on your terms.

Why the need to edit?

What's wrong with being happy with the original photo? Nothing at all, of course. Maybe, however, you might not have an extended, uninterrupted preparation period with a rock-solid platform from which to set a camera up perfectly and the skills to get it right on every shot. Perhaps you can't quite manage to get the camera as level as you might have liked or you took a photo which perfectly captured the action yet came out a little too dark. Maybe you wish to have a bit of fun: to release a little artistic flair and mix things up a bit.

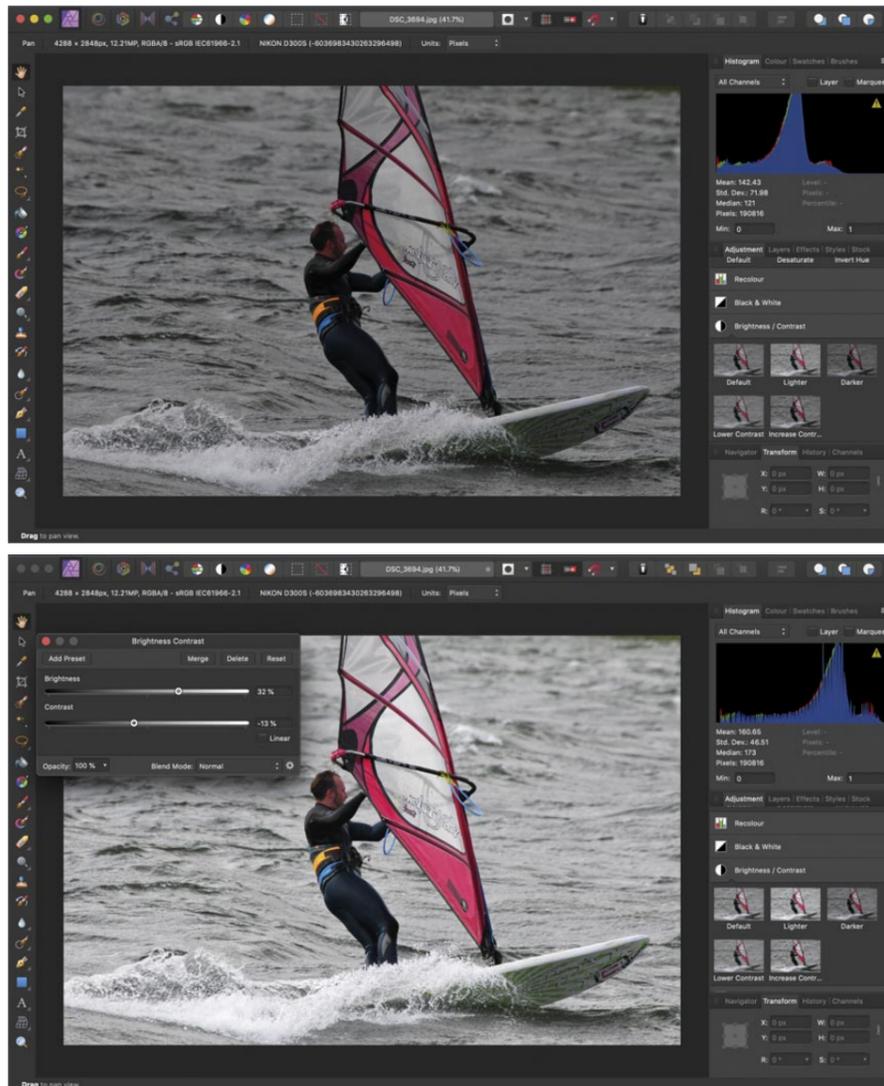


Fancy changing the colour of your kit and making the sea black and white? No problem! Images can be manipulated in any number of ways.

Basic editing

Basic editing allows us to transform a good photo into an even better photo: it permits us to engineer it – to fix it up. Getting into it is easy and involves just playing around with the controls. Many elements of basic editing are done by grabbing a marker and pulling it up and down a scale so it is very easy to try things to see how they look. If you lose track of where you are then you can undo each edit one at a time or revert to the original and start again. Most programmes allow non-destructive editing which permits changes to be made (sometimes on separate layers) without overwriting the original image data – so that the original and the edited versions are both saved. If not, or you are unsure, then it is always best to duplicate your image before editing. Here are a few very simple fixes you can make to your windsurfing snaps.

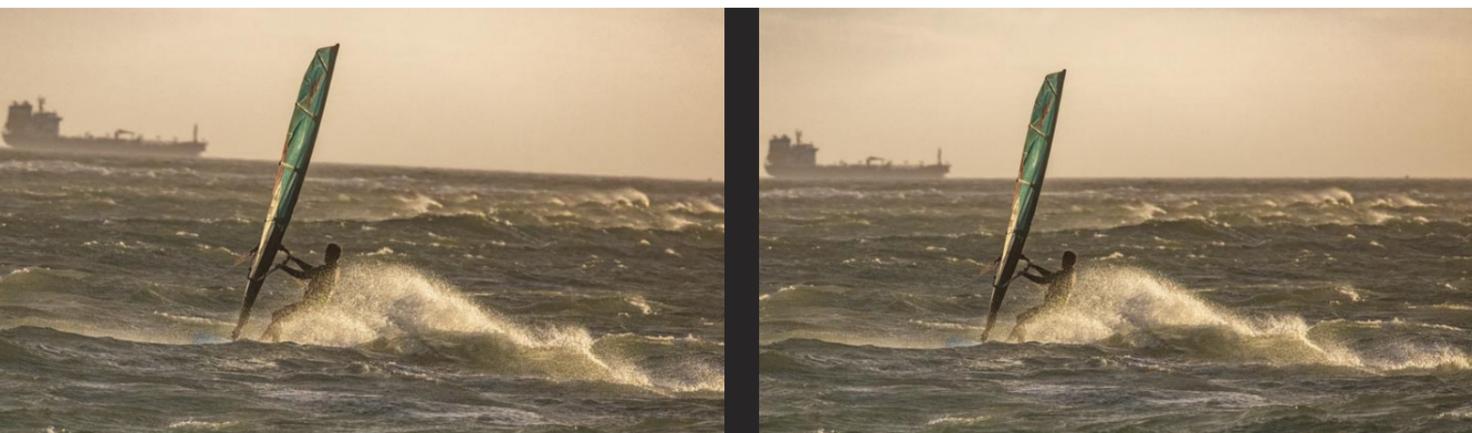
Right: Tweaking the brightness and contrast on a photo that came out quite dark



Straightening

Many of our windy pics will be taken by a mate from the beach so should contain a fair chunk of horizon consisting mostly of water. Looking at a great shot of you blasting along or on a wave will be all the sweeter if the straightening tool

has been used to level the horizon so this is a good first step. Look back at your recent shots and if the horizon is sometimes sloping to one side and it looks like the water is about to pour out of the edge of the photo then introduce yourself to the straightening tool.



Straightening up images is easy and effective – especially those with dominant horizons



The healing tool on the Enlight Quickshot app is fast and accurate and cleanly removes the K4 Harness Mount carbon pole in seconds

Cropping: removal of dead space

Basic editing usually involves a little cropping. This can remove some of the composition details around the subject (water, scenery or random objects) and can re-frame the windsurfer. Crop just the minimum amount away to avoid the final image becoming too grainy as it gets automatically resized to fit the full-frame.

Cropping: aspect ratio

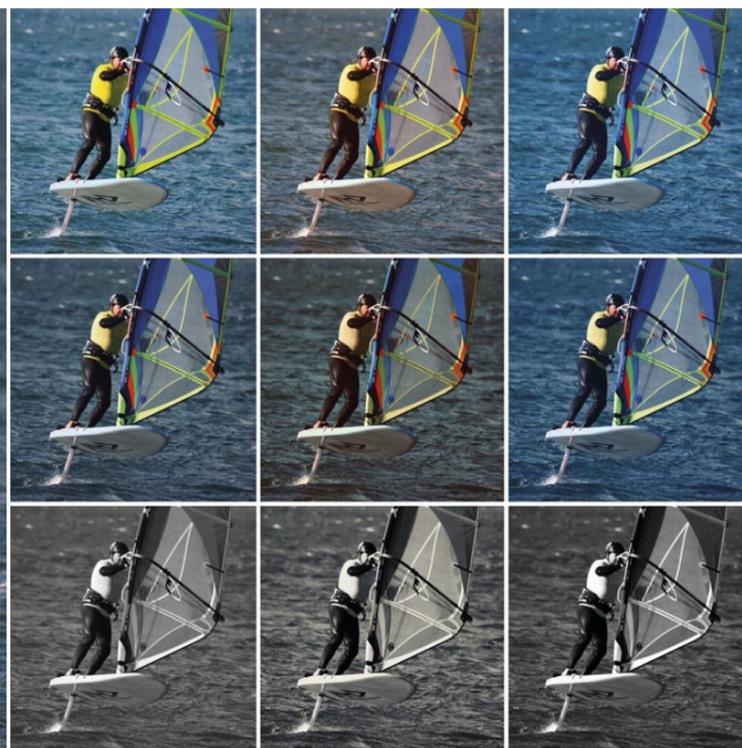
Cropping to the original proportions (sometimes done by selecting 'constrain' or 'original') will retain the balance between the horizontal and the vertical proportions of the image when the cropping handles are pulled around. This avoids chopping too much off one edge to make the picture too thin or wide in one direction. Specific standard aspect ratios can be selected such as 'square' (good for Instagram and 4 and 9 image collages), 16:9 or 4:3 and there is sometimes an option to crop a landscape shot to make it a perfectly proportioned portrait shot.

Left: Cropping highlights the subject of the photo, especially in selfies where the Flymount has been positioned high up the mast

Spot removal and healing

Most basic editing programmes will have a spot removal or healing tool. This can airbrush away small imperfections in the photo, unwanted subjects such as a boat or that most dreaded of things – the head of a swimmer in the water getting too close to you when you're tearing into the sandbar at 25 knots. Although I am quite partial to seeing the carbon pole in a K4 Harness Mount shot, you can use spot removal to hide it, making it appear that the photo was taken using the world's longest lens or by a drone flying dangerously close to your shoulders. Also called re-touching or clone-stamping, the programme copies the adjacent colours and textures to mask over the unwanted element. Beware of making a mess when using spot removal in a busy photo as some programmes fail to differentiate between one thing and another and so blend elements chaotically.

Left: If this photo was published most of the comments would be about the head of the person in the water and not about the action. Use the healing tool and no one will ever know...



Original versus all 9 Apple Photos basic colour level presets. The collage is made using Layout from Instagram

Colour levels

The overall colour tone of the image can be adjusted by changing the white balance. This can make it look more or even less natural as per your preference. RAW files, containing more digital data, respond better than JPGs when editing white balance. Often editing programs have preset modes. Apple Photos, for example, has some nice basic presets (as seen above in the order left to right and from top to bottom): vivid, vivid warm, vivid cool, dramatic, dramatic warm, dramatic cool, mono, silvertone and noir. Other colour adjustment options include temperature (or warmth) and tint.

Exposure

Although getting the photo bright enough in the first place is the best option (by selecting the correct exposure) alterations can be made to the exposure in the editing phase to brighten it up or darken it down a little. Beware of creating 'noise' in the image by pulling up the exposure too much. Noise is a grainy mask in a photograph (the visual equivalent of hiss in an audio recording) which can obscure details and reduce the quality of the final image.

Contrast

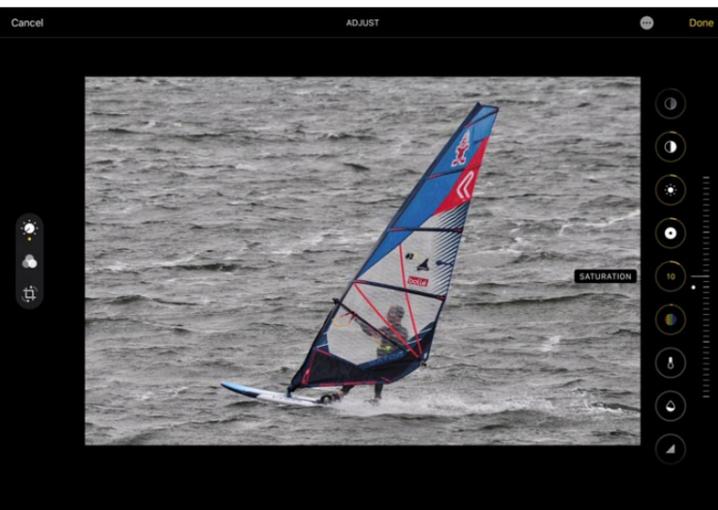
Adjusting the contrast plays with the tone range from dark to light. High contrast settings give a starker image where all tones are either very dark or very light. Low contrast gives a flatter image where no elements stand out. A medium contrast avoids these extremes.

Saturation, vibrancy and HSL settings

Fine-tuning the vibrancy of a photo increases the colour intensity in neutral colour tones whilst maintaining colour intensity in the brighter colours. Increasing saturation makes all the colours in the image look more intense. The HSL (hue, saturation and luminance) panel in Adobe Lightroom and Affinity Photo offers advanced manipulation and inversion of colours.

Sharpness

Images can be sharpened to show detail in a cleaner, more well-defined way. This can be useful for printed images yet should not be too important for social media posts. It is worth noting that the photo element needs to be in focus to enable it to be made sharper as editing tools cannot correct out-of-focus images.



Apple Photos, seen here on the iPad Pro, has a sensible range of tools for basic, fast editing



Marilyn Monroe original publicity photo



Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe paintings, 1967 – showed the world how an original can become anything you want it to be

Enhanced editing

Enhanced editing goes further. It provides opportunities to take the original form of the photo and to pull it around so much that it becomes a completely new version of the original. Think of Pop Art. Think Andy Warhol. In 1967 – way ahead of his time – Warhol created dozens of different yet similar paintings of Marilyn Monroe from just one iconic publicity shot of the actress. Enhanced editing has become easy and it opens the door to maximum creativity; to create a unique version of the original.

Filters are fun and can change the image in one click or swipe. Colour images can be switched into black and white and all manner of washes can be applied to the photo to make it brighter, duller, textured or grainy. Tones can be drawn out or the image imbued with radiance, light spots, rain, haze, stars, rainbows...you name it! Beware though as going overboard with filters can destroy a previously good photo and over-use of a common filter (on Instagram for example) can put people off. Unless you want to do something quite striking, sometimes less is more when it comes to changing the original with a filter.

Using phone/tablet apps

The sheer number and diversity of photo-editing apps for phones and tablets is mind-blowing yet not all are particularly relevant to us perhaps, especially as many service the younger Snapchat generation and their ephemeral social media habits. With windsurfing images, we probably have little need to add puppy ears or a head-wreath of butterflies to ourselves, stitch-in a new set of abs, create an avatar or swap our facial features out for different ones. Some apps (such as Photofox) are pretty radical/arty, enabling the superimposing of mountain scenes into your hair or forks of lightning into the sky. 'Live' or 'animated' photos are a relatively new twist yet these are essentially mini videos. Here is a varied selection of free or cheap mobile apps for basic and enhanced image editing which I think are worthy of a look.

- 1) Apple Photos & Google Photos:** simple, quick, basic editing. Apple has a better range of editing tools than Google yet Google has enhanced cloud storage/search and photo sharing options
- 2) Snapseed:** professional all-purpose photo editor by Google. Loads of editing options, precision tools, filters, and crop/rotate options. Easy to use and suitable for beginner to advanced
- 3) Color Splash:** amazing for black and white vs colour effects and creative collages. Switch the whole image to black and white then pinch to zoom in and fill the colour back in for just the subject
- 4) ToonCamera:** this app has been around for ages and is better than it sounds! Change your images into works of art in the style of paintbrush strokes, pencil sketches or deep and moody scenes
- 5) Layout (from Instagram):** a great app for making quick collages of your best photos. Other apps such as InShot offer a wider range of frames and borders
- 6) Instagram:** if you use IG a lot then the uncomplicated range of filters, enhancement features and crop/rotate options could be all you need



The healing tool together with a grunge filter on the Snapseed app has converted this cluttered image into something like an old daguerreotype





Apps like Color Splash allow you to turn a photo into black and white before washing fragments of the colour back in



Below are a few other apps which are high quality yet can demand hefty chunks of your hard-earned cash to access most of the features. Beware of the 'in app purchases' trap: free versions of apps like Enlight Quickshot or Comic Captions will push you so hard to pay for the full version that you will quickly end up either paying-up, deleting the app or half losing your mind whilst struggling to use it against the flow of pop-up subscription demands.

- **Photoshop Express:** provides a full spectrum of professional photo effects described as 'a digital studio for mobile devices'

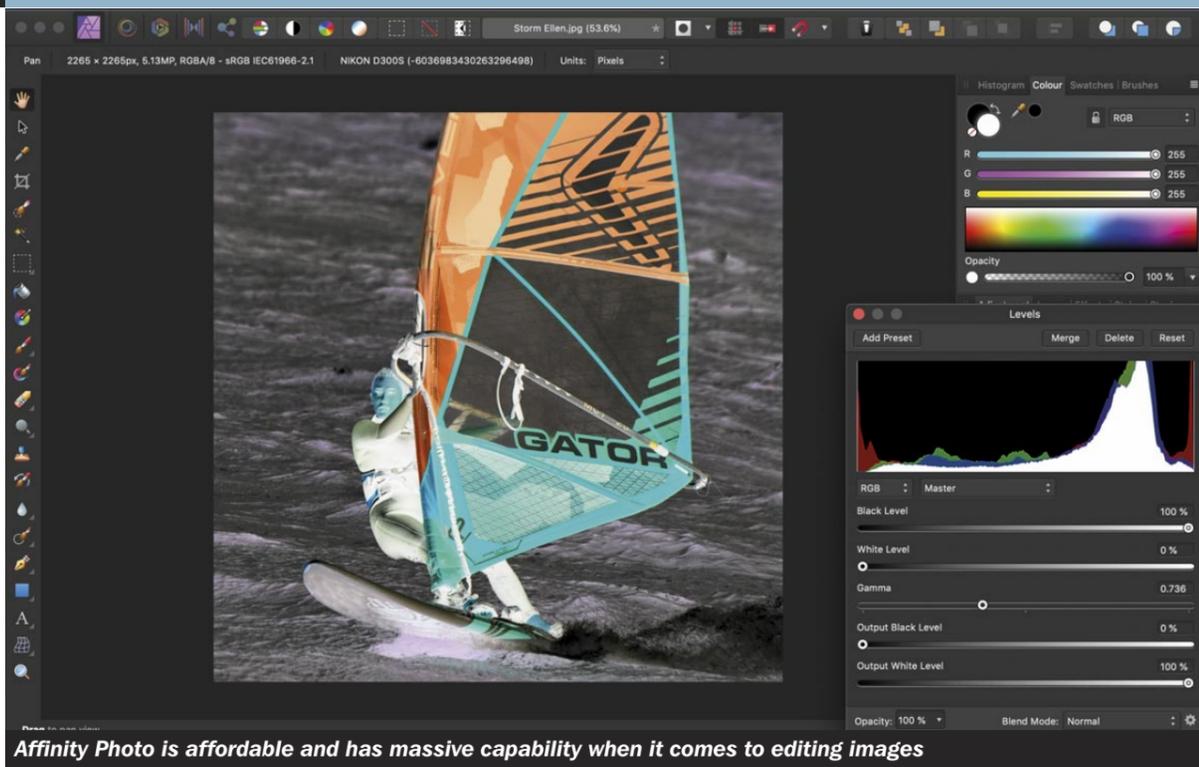
- **BeCasso Photo Editor:** for the creation of impressive 'paintings', 'sketches' and 'canvas art' from your photos
- **Enlight Quickshot:** has a substantial range of effects, adjustments and filters including radical replacement of the whole sky with anything from clear blue to lightning or northern lights! Heavily marketed on Instagram this is a powerful app and well worth the money
- **Comic Captions:** a fun app to add neat comic-strip-style speech/thought bubbles and other cartoon-strip effects to your photos



Foiling original versus edits from the Toon Camera and Enlight Quickshot apps



Comic Captions is a fun app for adding speech bubbles and other cartoon effects



Affinity Photo is affordable and has massive capability when it comes to editing images

Using software packages

Sitting down with a cup of tea for a post-windsurf editing session at your computer is a much more wholesome experience – in my humble opinion – than squiggling away with cold, fat fingers hunched over a phone. The go-to professional programme for editing and organising photos on a PC or Mac platform has to be Adobe Lightroom and can be used for a monthly subscription to include the mobile app version as well as cloud storage. Adobe Photoshop is synonymous with photo editing, enables detailed manipulation of any type of image and is also a subscription service. Not everyone, however, likes the idea of paying monthly for life to use these Adobe packages.

A slick, capable alternative to Photoshop is Affinity Photo. This is available for a one-off purchase (with free updates for life) equivalent to about five months of Photoshop and this makes it significantly cheaper in the long term. I have recently started using Affinity Photo and it is excellent. Being professional packages, Adobe and Affinity products will require effort to become competent in the use of - so put some time aside to learn from the online tutorials. If you need something far simpler then try Microsoft Photos app for Windows 10 or Apple Photos for a Mac, both of which are pre-installed. iPhoto is the discontinued programme from Apple which does a great job of very basic bulk editing if you still have it installed. Beware though – once you uninstall it you cannot have it back!

The result?

So, what can you do now with your perfectly edited windsurfing selfies and your phone/DSLR photos? Options include spamming others through your social media account, producing banner-sized prints and draping them around the outside of your house and turning them into a nice set of coasters or a cheap tee shirt. Seriously though, it's your image, edited in your way

and you can do whatever you want with it. Just make sure you have fun in the photoshoot on whichever side of the camera you find yourself and put your best windsurfing pics out into the world somehow to show yourself off and to make others see what's happening in our great sport.

Head to: <http://www.simonwinkley.com/windsurfing-uk/> to view previous article

Simon Winkley is a RYA Advanced Windsurfing Trainer and Instructor.

Supported by: Starboard, Severne, K4 Fins, Flymount, Bollé, Bray Lake Watersports & Spinlock.

Overseas Coaching Clinics:

- Prasonisi, Rhodes: 14-21 September 2020
- Costa Teguisse, Lanzarote: mid-March 2021
- Alaçati, Turkey: end-June 2021
- Prasonisi, Rhodes: end-September 2021

2020 Weymouth Coaching Weekends at the OTC:

- simonwinkley.com/uk-clinics
- 26 September – 1 October: fully booked
- 28/29 November: places available
- 30 November/1 December: places available

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