

# Outdoors

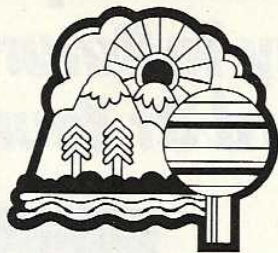


Illustration: Gary Hoover

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## Wayne Davis has found a rather unusual means of alternative hunting transportation: a 1,500-pound pet Brahma. And that's no bull.

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By Hank Nuwer

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Mention Wayne Davis's name to hunters in the Arkansas-Missouri Ozarks, and chances are they'll associate this moniker with a lot of bull. It's not that the thirty-five-year-old outdoorsman exaggerates his prowess with a rifle; rather, the trusty steed he rides into the sunset is a 1,500-pound Brahma named Dozer.

The idea of taking a bull on a hunt may sound farfetched, but Davis says not to knock it till you ride it. The first time he took Dozer on a hunt back in November, he swaggered home with a ten-point buck. To capture a trophy that size, many an outback hunter would gladly straddle a *chicken*.

On a recent afternoon, I accompanied Davis to his spacious pastureland, located about an hour's drive south of Little Rock. He threw an old Western saddle atop Dozer and kindly offered me a ride. In the interest of investigative journalism, and because I hated to chicken out in the presence of my wife, I agreed.

Standing alongside Dozer, I kept thinking that anything this big really should have four wheels and a license plate. My opinion changed not a whit as I vaulted up into the saddle, my left leg in one county and my right leg in another. The beast took off, and it was then that I appreciated what a fine

horseman—er, bullman—Davis really is. The girth, you see, is impossible to fully tighten on an animal with a belly so massive. Davis's experience as a rider and his amazing balance keep him aloft with ease. I, on the other hand, have always possessed the equilibrium of an etherized elephant. Dozer swayed one way, I swayed the other. Soon the saddle had slipped so that the saddle horn was somewhere in the vicinity of Dozer's right rib. My foot caught in the stirrup, and I hit the wet earth, with my head resting a couple of inches from a hoof wide enough to store umbrellas.

Now, any self-respecting horse would have taken the opportunity to scrape my hide along the ground until I fell off. But good ol' Dozer has not a drop of sadistic blood in

his veins. He stood as still as Gibraltar, his brown eyes looking down at me over his nose ring. Davis was nice about the whole thing, telling me that I had ridden "pretty good there at first," a compliment that diminishes in value when you consider I only rode ten feet.

Davis, truly an accomplished horseman, explains his admittedly unusual means of transport. "Genuine horsepower is a disadvantage on a hunt compared to bullpower—it's as simple as that. You miss a lot of game on a horse, because you pay more attention to the horse than to your hunting," asserts the hunter in his thicker-than-black-strap-molasses drawl. "I don't need to pay any attention to Dozer. He's slow and steady."

Dozer's appellation is short for "bulldozer," because "he kind of



Photograph: Jenine Stein

pushes right along wherever he goes," explains his owner.

The Brahma is gun-smoke gray and boasts a well-formed hump and excellent conformation. Although his bloodlines trace back to registered show stock, Davis insists that his bull is not just another pretty muzzle. In addition to helping his owner thin the deer population of the Ozark area, Dozer justifies his existence by plowing planting fields and hauling firewood by skidder sled.

One cannot help envisioning how the genre of Western films might have been had Roy Rogers and Gene Autry traded in their famous mounts for the likes of Dozer.

The simple fact is that bulls have a definite advantage over horses on a hunt. Davis explains. "It usually gets real boggy in the wintertime, and horses can't stand up in the woods, because their hooves are round and get more suction. So when it's wet, you often have to

stop riding and start walking, which takes a lot of fun out of a hunt. A bull's got a split hoof. He doesn't bog down like a horse."

At present, Davis is reading up on Brahmas, and has learned that Brahmas are the only cows that

**His favorite foods are grain and beef fattener pellets, but he's also been known to scarf down a blooming azalea bush for a quick energy snack.**

sweat through the pores of their skin the way horses and people do. "The others sweat through their nose and are bothered quite a lot by heat," says Davis.

The only difficulty thus far that Davis has experienced on a hunt is

that he must isolate Dozer from the company of trail horses. "They're mean to him," he explains. "They scare him and kick him and sometimes even bite him. When I first started riding Dozer around horses, if one of them even looked at him wrong, he got scared."

The bull does appear eager to please the Davis family. He lowers his massive head into the folds of skin under his neck whenever his ears are scratched, and he genuinely loves the company of people and other animals. His favorite foods are grain and beef fattener pellets, but he's also been known to scarf down a blooming azalea bush for a quick energy snack.

Another problem with Dozer has been getting him to stop on command when aggravated. It sounds like a new version of an old joke:

**Question:** When will a three-quarter-ton bull stop on command?

**Answer:** Any time he wants to. □

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