

# Popularity of Bailey's Bee Supply Spreads to Africa

Bailey's Bee Supply has become a trusted and much-appreciated beekeeping equipment retailer in the Triangle, with stores in Hillsborough and Raleigh. Through a generous donation to support third-world agricultural development initiatives, its products are now being praised even farther afield: the Sahara desert of West Africa.

Master Beekeeper Randall Austin was recently invited to share his insights and expertise with the students and faculty of the Institut Supérieur D'Enseignement Technologique (ISET; "Higher Institute of Technical Education" in English), a technical college in Rosso, Mauritania. He also met with small groups of interested beginners in the capital city and rural villages. A portion of the equipment donated by David Bailey, which included protective veils and jackets, smokers, gloves, hive tools and pest assessment equipment was given to the college's entomology department. The rest will be distributed to new beekeepers who participate in a "bee school" type program.



Randall Austin presents donated equipment to the Entomology Faculty at ISET-Rosso.

The trip provided a rare opportunity to observe the native honey bee in that region, *apis mellifera adonsonii*, and talk with beekeepers about how they interact with it.

Mauritania is in the Sahara desert, but cropland is intensely irrigated all along the Senegal River. Mangos, eggplant, okra, millet, various melons and rice are among the crops that are grown year-round. Local vegetation feeds herds of cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels, and the area watered by the river has an abundance of wild honey bee colonies. Wax and honey are commonly collected by traditional honey robbers rather than beekeepers. The bees are extremely defensive and are very easily aroused --- merely looking at a hive from 20 feet away incited stings. The bees respond to perceived threats in huge numbers, defend a large area around the hive and pursue intruders for a mile or more. Contrary to best American practice, beekeepers will only work with their hives at night, which reduces the risk of harm to unsuspecting bystanders.



Randall Austin examines a wild honey bee colony that has nested in an underground crevice. The European honey bees that are kept in North Carolina rarely nest in the ground.

Just as in North Carolina, African beekeepers possess a wide range of understanding with regard to proper colony nutrition and pest management. Austin shared suggestions based on fundamental bee biology, taking into account that all beekeeping management practices must be tailored to the local

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environment, experience level of the beekeeper, characteristics of the local bees, availability of materials and so forth. His study of highly-defensive Africanized Honey Bees (*apis mellifera scutellata*) and hands-on experience with them on a similar trip to the Dominican Republic provided valuable perspective for discussions with African beekeepers.

"I was happy to be able to help support Randall's effort," said David Bailey. "Helping others improve their lives, even in a small way, can make a big difference in the rest of the world. It can make a big difference here at home, too, for that matter. Trips like this can remind us of that."