

Zain Africa Challenge 2010 – Ask Mwalimu

Episode 1, Show 9 – Most Numerous Animals.

I hope you're enjoying tonight's edition of Zain Africa Challenge. The teams are brilliant.

Playing the game calls upon knowledge from many fields of study and from everyday life.

As a mwalimu, Swahili for teacher, it gives me great pleasure to see that these students have mastered so many diverse facts and concepts.

You are invited to submit topics for our "Ask Mwalimu" segments.

The first question we will answer this season is, "Are humans the most numerous animals on Earth?"

The world's population surpassed 6.8 billion people in 2010, an astounding number considering there was less than half that number just 50 years ago.

There are more humans than any other animal species larger than a chicken. Chickens themselves are estimated to number around 16 billion. That's more than two chickens for every person!

But we are only getting started. It's estimated that there are 1.6 billion insects for every *person on Earth*, and that the combined weight of the bodies of *just the ants* is equal to that of all the humans.

People and insects live only on land though, and 70% of the Earth's surface is under water. It's estimated that, in terms of weight, the jellyfish are the most plentiful creatures.

But numerically in first place are the roundworms or nematodes, as they live both in the soil and the ocean's floor all over the world. 4 to 5 billion of them can live in a single hectare of topsoil and the total number of roundworms is in the range of 10 sextillion; that's a 10, with 21 zeros behind it.

A truly mind-boggling number.

If you have a question you'd like to "Ask Mwalimu", write to me at: mwalimu@zainafrichallenge.com or submit your query on our website at www.ZainAfricaChallenge.com.