What Is the Deadliest Animal in the World?

Ask students this question, and you will likely get many responses. Write the answers on the board to categorize responses and lead your students to the correct answer.

Students often list large animals, such as great white sharks, tigers, bears, alligators and hippos. If you tell them that the answer is a smaller animal, they may mention snakes, blue-ring octopuses or box jellies. If you let them know that the animal is even smaller, they might come up with spiders, ticks or even mosquitoes.

Sometimes the students will mention viruses, bacteria or plants. Although these can also be very deadly, this is a good opportunity to discuss the characteristics of a true animal.

The activity can be a Thought Toss. Students toss an object or toy and give an answer when they catch it (suggestion: a stuffed mosquito). Some classes guess right away that the answer must be “mosquito” since they are tossing one, but others take longer to catch on.

When you are ready for the Big Reveal, whether or not your students got the correct answer, the Gates Foundation Gates Notes blog has a good set of resources: http://www.gatesnotes.com/Health/Most-Lethal-Animal-Mosquito-Week

Gates Notes Resources:
- Graphic of World’s Deadliest Animals: Number of People Killed by Animals per Year shows that the mosquito is the “deadliest animal.” (Note: The graph states that humans kill other humans at a rate of 475,000 per year. It includes citations, but is not clear whether this statistic counts deaths by murder, wars, accidents or other causes.)
- Short video clip about Mosquito Week.
- Three additional short video clips: What Malaria Feels Like, Defeating Dengue and Outsmarting Mosquitoes.

Exit Ticket Ideas:
- Why is the mosquito the deadliest animal in the world?
- Why do you think it is so hard to control mosquitoes? What do you think humans could do to control mosquitoes?
- Do you think we could ever completely eradicate mosquitoes from Earth? Would this be a good idea? Why or why not?