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Article 1

The Loveliest Fish in the Sea

Long before the release of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* in 1989, mermaids were written about in ancient Assyrian and Greek literature, referred to as sirens. Christopher Columbus swore he saw them on his voyages to the new world in the 15th century. In the same century, there is reference in Chinese literature to a mermaid who wept tears that became pearls. A statue of a little mermaid is a national treasure in Denmark, based on Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tale, *The Little Mermaid* in 1836. The idea that a human with a fish's tail could survive under the sea has universally captivated people's imagination.

Science has no record of these aquatic creatures, but that has not stopped mermaid fans around the world from establishing mermaid swimming schools. In the Philippines, more than half a dozen such schools have sprouted up. Courses in mermaid swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving, and fitness, among others are offered. In Spain, the Sirenas Academy is also open for business. The owners boast of the benefits mermaiding can bring. Many muscles in the body are exercised, as well as the heart and lungs, too. It even improves one's mood, they say.

Most people attend mermaid swimming schools to get into shape, fulfill a dream, or just have fun. It is surprising to many people that being a mermaid can also be a full-time occupation. Many theme parks employ mermaids to attract attention from a curious public. Even more importantly, mermaids are raising people's consciousness about the importance of oceans not only to the survival of plants and animals within them, but to the sustainability of humans.

The most famous mermaid is undoubtedly Mermaid Melissa, her real name. She devoted herself to drawing attention to the need to keep our oceans clean and healthy. With ocean acidification, overfishing, and marine pollution on the rise, it is necessary for people to become aware of how important the health of the oceans is to every living being on the planet.

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