**CHAPTER 1**

Manatees or Mermaids??

Did you know that long ago, sailors believed that manatees were actually mermaids?

Well, now we know that that isn’t true! Christopher Columbus was the first person to record the sighting of a manatee in the New World. A **manatee** is an aquatic mammal with a rounded tail flipper. It is also called a sea cow. Manatees are a grayish color and are huge!! A manatee can weigh between 800 – 1,200 pounds. Now that’s big!! Manatees average 10 feet in length. There have been manatees that were bigger. These are just the average numbers. The skin of a manatee is very tough and it has bristles all over its body. It is a lot like an elephant. You don’t have to worry about the manatee stealing your hamburger because manatees are **vegetarians**. They only eat veggies!! Manatees are enormous and fascinating creatures!

