

March 2011 - Kipper31

Congratulations to Chris and Lorna Heidenreich on winning the RTAW Tank of the Month for March, 2011, with their beautiful, flourishing mixed reef system.

Chris is known as kipper31 on the RTAW forums and you can find out more about this system by checking out his tank journal.

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Thanks for choosing our tank for TOTM, my wife and I feel very privileged that other people have found our tank worthy of mention, let alone Tank of the Month.

I have always kept fish of some description as a kid, keeping anything from yabbies and mosquito fish caught in the local creek to Goldfish. I got seriously into keeping aquariums when I met my wife ten years ago, she had a 4ft tank with tropical fish and plants. A few years later we decided to buy a 5ft, all in one tank, and built that up over a few years. We enjoyed an assortment of fish but really liked the look of the planted tanks. We then decided to try a full on planted tank and started researching systems on the net. That's when we stumbled upon the feature tank page on the MASA site. We spent all night looking at journals and pictures and we both knew from that night on that we were going to attempt to keep a coral reef aquarium. We spent probably 4 months researching the net and visiting the local fish stores before we walked into Marine+ in Adelaide and placed an order for the tank and equipment. The tank was finally wet on 22nd of October, 2009.

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The tank we chose was 5ft x 20 x 24 inches with a centre weir housing a durso overflow and the return pipes. We kept the custom built, 2 pac painted stand and had the tank built to suit. The only regret we have so far is that we only have a 20 inch wide tank to play with, we know better for the next setup.

Our filtration consists of a 900 x 400 x 400mm sump, divided into three sections. The first houses a Reef Octopus skimmer rated to 1500 litres. The second has a deep sand bed with macro algae grown in about one quarter of the bed. The third section houses the Eheim 5000 compact return pump and a fluid bed filter in which we run Rowaphos to help with phosphate control.

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In tank flow consists of two return pipes angled at 45 degrees and two Tunze pumps in each rear corner, so flow is running in roughly a figure eight around the tank. Total in tank flow is approximately 12000 litres/hour, which by some standards is not enough, but at the moment it seems to be working alright. As we move towards a more SPS based tank we might have to add a bit more.

Our lights consist of 2 x 250W, double ended metal halides running AMD 15000K globes and 4 x T5s, 2 of which are ATI aquablue specials, 1 x blueplus and 1 x purpleplus. The lighting period is T5s - 11:30am till 8:30pm, Halides - 1:30pm to 6:00pm.

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This Summer we purchased a Hailea 500 chiller and we use an Eden 2400 litre/hour pump to feed water to it. It seems to work well and drops the temperature from 27 to 26 degrees in around 15 - 20 minutes, depending on room temperature.

This April we had a trip planned to Cairns and as I had been dosing my supplements manually, I purchased a Bubble Magus dosing pump. With this we dose calcium chloride, magnesium and bicarb soda. I now mix my additives once a week and add it to my auto topup but still keep an eye on the levels as it relies on equal amounts of evaporation each day.

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I check my mag and calcium once a week and my alk about twice a week. My parameters are as follows:

Alk - 8.0dKh - API kit

Magnesium - 1350ppm - Salifert kit

Calcium - 400ppm - API kit

Ph - 8.2

Nitrate - undetectable on API kit

Phosphate - I get checked at the LFS and generally comes in at around 0.03-0.07ppm.

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We do weekly water changes of approximately 15-20% using RO-DI (PSI unit) and Red Sea Coral Pro salt. Without fail I feel that this is one of the best things I can do for my reef, nice clean water with all the nutrients and at this stage I don't dose anything else. I siphon out any detritus in the sump and then fan the rocks with a spatula before using the siphon etc.

Now for the livestock. we started with a 20kg box of live rock and have added approximately 40-60 kgs of base rock over the last few years, adding bits when we needed more space to mount corals. Fish wise we haven't got a lot as we have mainly been concentrating on the corals. We are now in the process of slowly changing over to a more SPS oriented system.

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Fish:

1 Yellow Tang

1 Powder Brown Tang

2 Banggai Cardinals

1 Lawnmower Blenny

1 Damsel that basically rules the tank

Corals:

Favites/Favias

Trachyphyllia

Cataphyllia

Acans of assorted colours

Blastomussia red/green and green/blue

Zoas

Lobophyllias

Montipora

Seriatopora pink Birdsnest

Turbinaria

Acropora/Millipora

assorted Mushrooms

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Finally I would like to thank all the guys on MASA that have helped me along the way and especially the guys at Marine Plus who i have purchased most of my equipment and livestock from. I think they got sick of me asking questions at the start but I gather they get that all the time.

My wife once made this comment when out to tea with half a dozen friends which pretty much sums up my interest in the tank:

"If he had his hands on me as much as he had them in the tank, I'd be a very happy woman"

I think most of us can relate to that comment, being involved in this hobby.

Thanks again.

