November 2008 - Craig Dunwoodie (Dunny)

Congratulations Craig Dunwoodie on winning TOTM November 2008 with his thriving, healthy tank.

Craig is known as Dunny on the RTAW Forums and you can read more about his tank in his Tank Journal.

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Background

My current tank has been running for just over a year now and it's been a pretty steep learning curve for someone who had only made the jump from freshwater the year before that. Whilst I have almost always had a freshwater setup of some kind it had long been a plan to eventually try my hand at keeping a saltwater system. As my 4 foot cichlid tank started falling apart I made the decision to jump into the deep end.

Of course I did this with not nearly enough research and purchased a standard 3 ft setup, complete with undergravel filter and fluoro lighting. It was fantastic, for a while, but I soon learned I had made some fundamental mistakes and not long after coming across the RTAW forums I began planning this tank.

Permission was granted and I began work on my dream tank. (as it turns out the dream is still evolving)

About The Tank

The display itself is a 5x2x2 ft tank with 10 mm glass. It came drilled and with a weir where I set up a durso and the return from the sump. I always loved this size tank as it looked huge to my eyes and held a large volume of water while still seeming somehow manageable.

I also purchased a 4x18x18 sump and a pine stand and hood to hold it all together. The sump itself is a simple 3 compartment arrangement that I never really gave much thought to, other than I wanted it to hold as much water as possible.

Equipment List

With a bit of research and a few wise words of advice I settled on the following equipment to run the system.

Skimmer : Reef Octopus DNW-200, originally meant to run next to the sump, but after realizing it simply wouldn't fit I have been running it in the mid section of the sump.

Skimmer feed pump: OceanRunner 2500

Return pump: Laguna 4

Lighting : 2 x 250 watt Itzmatty ballasts currently running 15k XM lamps. Lighting period is from 12;30pm to 9;30pm

Recent addition of 2 Lumenarc copy reflectors.

Flow : Tunze ts 24 kit with 7095 controller. I have also added an old Moozoo powerhead behind the rock to help with a slight dead patch in the flow.

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Filtration

Filtration is handled by the in sump skimmer and about 80- 100 kgs of live rock in the display and a further 20 -30 kgs in the sump. There is also a DSB in the display. There is no refugium.

Temperature Control

This is handled by 2 largish fans, one running in the hood when the lights come on and the other over the sump when I finally realize things are getting warmer than they should be.

Additives

Calcium is kept at desired levels by adding Damprid , Alkalinity is controlled using Bi Carb soda. I also make use of kalc made from builders lime which I drip overnight to help maintain levels, although to be honest this happens less and less these days as unfortunately I suffer from laziness.

Water

I use only NSW which I either buy or collect myself, ideally doing a 20% water change fortnightly, but this quite often blows out to monthly.

Top up water is provided by a PSI RODI filter.....invaluable!

The only automation on this system are the light timers, everything else is done manually which while not being ideal has taught me a lot about the way the system reacts to changes. However, I have been caught out many times and one of the future goals for this set up is to introduce some automation for a little more piece of mind.

Maintenance

Other than daily top ups and fortnightly water changes I don't do a whole lot- clean the glass regularly and scrape the coralline when it starts to take over. I clean the skimmer neck weekly but would like to get into the habit of doing it twice a week, as when I do water clarity is much better.

Fish

This tank has always been relatively lightly stocked, however I do have plans for more fish in the future.

Currently there is :

A pair of Ocellaris clowns

Sailfin tang

Yellow tang

2 blue-green chromis and

a flame angel.

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Corals

One thing I have not got any better at is naming corals....it's all common names for me I'm afraid.

I have:

Elegance coral

Frogspawn

A couple of different coloured torches

Bubble coral

Various brain corals

Various acans

A few acropora, in truth I haven't faired all too well with these over the long term,

Trachyphylia

Lobophylia

Leathers

There is also an ever expanding army of mushrooms and zoanthids.

Duncan

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Inverts

There are numerous crabs,snails and elusive peppermint shrimps

Acknowledgments

Firstly I must say that I am truly blown away and honoured by this acknowledgment of my little tank. I honestly would never have expected this as I still believe my tank is evolving.....there is much work to be done. I don't believe my tank is in the same league as many of the previous winners or even many of the amazing tanks that pop up daily in the forum now, but it can be and one day it will be.

The list of people on this forum who have inspired me and who I have learnt from is too long to print here, however I must thank a few. Thanks Damien (damer) who has helped with everything from equipment to rock ,frags, and advice. And to Jack (Jft) for the frags that helped colour the tank. I must also mention Ernie at Reeflections for all the help and the late night delivery of this tank in bad weather.

And thanks to all that regularly drop in on my tank journal for words of encouragement. It really has kept me going.

And thanks to my wife for putting up with the time, money and frustration that can go into this hobby. She has put up with a lot (and reminds me almost daily