# February 2010 - Janice Carruthers (jac2610)

Congratulations to Janice Carruthers on winning TOTM for January 2010 with her 9 foot mixed reef.

Janice is known as jac2610 on the RTAW Forums and you can read more about her tank in her Tank Journal .

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How long have you been in the hobby?

We started out with our first marine tank in 1993ish being a standard 6 ft tank after keeping tropicals for a few years. We bought it second hand from someone who had literally let it go and when we viewed it we couldn't see through the water it was that dark green. We ended up with a couple of fish and some live rock and LOTS of algae but it was a start. This was our learning tank and I must admit we were pretty basic back then with little or no testing, bad lighting and bio balls....(don't tell anyone!!)

After moving house we custom built our own stand and hood but again with little knowledge and experience we relied on the local fish shop to provide advice and we paid a lot of money for not a lot of result.  Being a bit of an ebay junkie in 2002 I saw a beautiful tank and stand on ebay with stained glass windows in the doors and everything and so we moved up to an 8foot tank but this was a bit of a disaster phase as the fake rock wall had little water flow and the lighting was pretty bad and the custom made sump and skimmer were badly planned and built and we ended up selling this in March 2006 around the same time we discovered MASA and worked out we could be doing things so much smarter.

We bought the current setup up from a MASA member in Sydney and carted the tank, stand hood and some live rock down in a truck and painstakingly transferred our old tank into the new one over a very long weekend.  Although fairly bare bones setup we have added on all the time savers for us (we really are the classic lazy reefers as little time as possible in maintenance) it has been a great system to run and we've now upgraded it to be pretty self sustaining and for us a very forgiving tank.  Our only problem now is the tank is too full and I can’t bear to throw anything out and we’ve ended up with a bit too much of everything but we’ve got to a point now where I regularly harvest corals rather than having to buy anything and totally saturated the ACT market with most of our stuff!!

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2) What size is your winning tank?

Tank set up in March 2006 is a 9x2x2 + sump ..all up around 1000litres.  As mentioned we truly are lazy reefers....one lesson we have learnt over the years is that the bigger you go the more forgiving and less repercussions from bad housekeeping.  More water volume has created for us a maintenance regime that suits our lifestyle...people always comment that it must be a huge amount of work but it’s actually in this format more easy to manage.

3) Anything you want to say about your stand?

White custom made timber cabinet 2800mm long x 780mm high...We raised this up on a base section another 170mm to bring the display tank viewing height up a bit higher as it is usually viewed standing up in our main kitchen area.  I would probably go even higher again if I had the opportunity but I doubt I’m ever going to get around to it unless we upgrade yet again (I can hear hubbie rolling around on the floor laughing as we speak!)

Hood: 2800mm x 500mm high Fully open at the top with 6 totally removable doors which is great for access for cleaning and good ventilation

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4) Do you have a sump and/or refugium?

Do you know I’ve never actually measured it but it is quite high sided and really quite a basic design split into two sections the return side (1/3 of the space) with some live rock and macro algae which is counter lighted to the tank overnight.  Our large urchin lives here banned from the display tank for knocking things over.  The other 2/3rds houses the two return pumps, the skimmer and heater and this is where (hopefully) all the crap accumulates and we vacuum this vigorously when doing water changes.

5) Filtration

WOW!!  I honestly have no idea on the amount of live rock  we’ve added and removed hundreds of kilos over the years.  All the rock is on 1/2 and 1/4 milk crates and there is a whole little world behind the rocks (our coral banded shrimps live here and unfortunately we now never see them out and about)  We do have pool dust on the bottom mainly for our filter feeders but we let this go to bare bottom in high water flow areas.

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6) Do you have a skimmer?

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7) Water flow

Display Water circulation: 1 x tunze 6500 2 x laguna 7000 on closed circuits

Return Pump: 2 x 2500 return pumps

8) Lighting

Display Lighting: 3 x 250W metal halides 20 000K bulbs, I did get some small neon lights for overnight but doesn’t make much impact and I need to get some better moonlighting on the setup.  The main tank lights come on at 10am and go off at 7.30pm year round.

Refugium Lighting: 1 x large compact fluro with reflector.  These lights come on at around 8.30pm and go off about 6.30am

9) Other equipment

Evaporation Top Up: Used to be manual but in 2008 upgraded to a tunze osmolater which sits in a large plastic tub inside the cupboard and has been a the best thing we added on. Use RO water to top up.

Calcium reactor: Reef Octopus CR-100 calcium reactor....hhhmmmm don’t get me started with this one....Refer to Flipper’s thread on “I’ve had it with this calcium reactor”...hasn’t worked properly in months and I’m awaiting a shipment of a new feed pump any day now.  I suppose it beats the hell out of manually dripping kalk to the tune of 10 litres a night!!  OMG...did I actually used to do that????

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10) Water parameters

Current Water Chemistry:

Nitrates: around 10ppm

Phosphates: currently hold the ACT record for the highest phosphate reading!!

Alkalinity: 11dkh or 4 meq/l

Calcium: 400 - 450ppm

Salinity / Specific Gravity: 1.027

11) Additives and conditioners

Don’t add much at all really, If I think of it add iodine and some trace elements but as one very knowledgeable reefer once told me which I will always remember, never add anything which you don’t test for.  Don’t test much = don’t add much.  I’ve learnt to read the tank and it’s inhabitants and have a feel if something is off but even our high phosphate readings doesn’t really bother anything much.  I’ve tried phosphate removers over the years and never had much success with (a) them actually reducing it much and (b) finding a noticeable difference to the tank.

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12) Fish

Inhabitants:

1 pair oscellaris clowns

1 x Paracanthurus hepatus - Blue Tang

1 x Zebrasoma scopas  - Brown Tang

1 x Siganus vulpinus – Foxface (13 years old)

1 x Naso literatus  - Lipstick Tang

1 x Gomphosus varius - birdnose wrasse

1 x Centropyge loricula - Flame Angel

1 x Sphaeramia nematoptera pyjama fish (13 years old)

1 x indian blenny

13) Coral

ummmm....where do I start.....bit of everything, I know definitely sinulara, gorgonian, brains, mushrooms, blue tipped stag, dallas, elegances, 2 x anemones, various zoos and  it goes on and on...

14) Inverts

1 x large blue starfish

1 pair coral banded shrimp

1 x burnt sausage

1 x punk sausage

1 x large urchin (banned to the sump for knocking things over)

various snails

15) Maintenance

As little as possible!! Glass clean once per week, water change maybe once every 4-6 weeks.  I’ve been doing 400 litres now about every month or so and this seems to be working out ok for our busy lifestyle.  Running the RO water over two nights in the 200 litre drums takes the most time.  Mix and heat and then the actual water change I’ve got down to about an hour.  Love the trolley’s that Rob made up ...now water changing is a breeze.  Would love to have a back room to do all of this but the tank is in the centre of the house with no access from behind as it backs onto a corridor

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16) Acknowledgments

My huge thanks goes to MASAOG members that have been no end of inspiration and support for every little drama and truly kept us going.  Joel - Jdub was a major source of true awe for us when getting things going right and his frags the major source of our tanks contents.  If we hadn’t found RTAW forum I’m sure we wouldn’t be going strong today.  Special thanks to Hammando who we bought our current tank setup and more recently to Gunmetlfairmont - Mike & Alli Field for their support with the ACT MASAOG committee and group events.  But I suppose my greatest acknowledgement goes to my hubbie Rob and 3 kids for sacrificing so much to allow us enjoy this incredible slice of the ocean in our house and spending an obscene amount of money and time on a hobby that has turned into a part of our family.  I will always treasure at the end of the day the race for being the first to say “night night fishies” when the lights go out...I love it!!