

AUGUST TANK OF THE MONTH

STEVE MITCHELL'S REEF



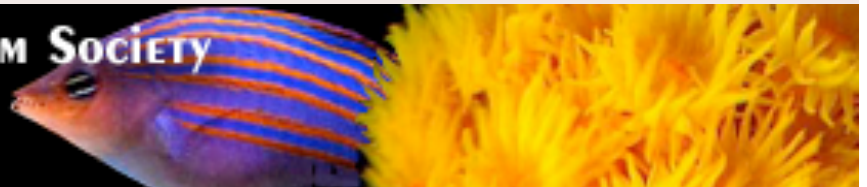
Interview and Write-up by Corey Price. Pictures by Mike Savage.

I arrived at Steve's house, puzzled by the lack of a doorbell sound, when I spied Steve checking out the outside electrical shutoff. We learned from a call to the power company that a tree service knocked out power down the road, which affected Steve's house. Steve narrated his tank to me while we sat in his dark basement, staring hopefully at a dark and eerily stagnant reef tank, punctuated by the occasional movement of a fish. Steve's 120 gallon glass tank is one of my favorite sizes, at 48" x 24" x 24", and has a 55 gallon vintage 1970's tank for a sump. Steve tells the following about his tank and hobby, as transcribed from the notes written on my laptop in his basement:



"I tried to get into saltwater aquariums about 20 years ago after having a freshwater tank for years. I went to a fish store one day and brought home fish immediately. Needless to say, I saw death within 8 hours of bringing the fish home. I didn't understand tank cycling and filtration at the time. I then tried a 80 gallon tank, filled with live rock, moved up to a 110 gallon and then this tank. I still have a 90 gallon freshwater tank and although it's easier to maintain, I like the saltwater tank better.

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I have 300 pounds of live rock in the current 120 gallon tank, all purchased from Matt Savage in June of 2007. I have about 1 to 2 inches of sand, and the tank houses mostly SPS and zoanthid coral. I had the tank in a previous house from which we moved; the current setup has been running for about 9 weeks as of the first week in August 2008. The return pump is a Mag 12 and circulation is provided by Korallias 3 and 4, which seem to be very adequate in producing water motion. I run a ASM G1 skimmer with which I'm very pleased. I run carbon and a Mag 350 hang-on, and I run carbon all the time.

The stand housing all of the sump, etc. came with the tank, and is a 2x4 painted stand with an open sump underneath. I love the openness of the stand since it allows for easy maintenance.



Lighting for the tank consists of two 54 watt T5HO in the back- one 10k and one actinic. On the front side, I run another set of two 39w T5HO, both actinics. The single metal halide is a 250 watt double-ended 14k Phoenix bulb. The metal halide bulb choice is limited by an unknown ballast, and I can't run Hamilton or other types of bulbs. I run my lights at 6:00 am and off at 10:00 pm, but I've been experimenting with running the metal halide from 6:00 am to 4:00 pm and then the T5's from 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm, and vice versa.

I do 10% water changes weekly, and top off the evaporation of the tank using tap water. The tap water has worked fine for me. Calcium and alkalinity demands are kept in check by using a variety of different additives, the current being a Kent Probuffer dKH, etc. I also dose Coralvit.

I have one Chromis, two Bicolor Anthias, one Blue Tang, one Dragon Goby, and two Clarki Clownfish. I feed daily, moderately, and I use garlic every time.

I have a 5" Gigas clam, and medium-sized serpent star, at least 100 snails and over 300 crabs. "The floor is always moving". I also have an unknown bubble tip anemone that no one seems to know what it is. I have a mated pair of coral bandit shrimp and the female usually carries eggs on her back.





I have numerous zoanthids and SPS coral. The SPS coral consists of acropora, birdsnest, plating monti, branching monti, pocillipora, etc.

One thing I've learned is, in my opinion, probably one of the most valuable thing in the tank- a UV sterilizer. I think it helps tremendously with ich and water quality. I had a Coralife sterilizer, but the bulb was as expensive as a 24w sterilizer at the local pet store, so I switched. I had a DIY Phosban

reactor, but after it sprang a leak, I don't have any more DIY items.

The club itself has been a neat experience. I've met all different kinds of people, and the friendships that I share are priceless."

Steve works at a tractor trailer aftermarket shop, and enjoys his cars, dogs, and family.

