

RED SEA MAX SURFACE SKIMMER

There can be little doubt that Red Sea's self contained range of marine aquaria, The Max, has taken the marine aquarium hobby by storm. Thousands of units have been sold worldwide giving both new marine aquarists and more experienced hobbyists a compact, high spec and very capable system in which to keep their livestock. Obtaining perfection in such an aquarium is difficult and the differing requirements of aquarists can mean that they are tempted to tweak the equipment to meet their individual requirements.

Further to Red Sea's excellent after-sales product support they are on the verge of launching an optional add-on to the Max aquarium. This is a surface skimmer enabling the organic material and algae that can form a slick on the surface waters of marine aquaria to be removed continually.

Surface debris, algae and protein slicks prevent the diffusion of gases so carbon dioxide can remain in the water and oxygen is prevented from dissolving into it. Light penetration is also reduced. Unmodified Max aquaria could facilitate skimming through adjustment of the moveable weir plate on the filter inlet but in most instances could not be left in this position as the pumps returning the water from the filters to the aquarium would eventually become starved of water and begin to blow bubbles into areas holding the livestock. Of course, this cannot be allowed to happen as bubbles irritate fish and can cause damage to invertebrates if they are



Fitted to an existing Max aquarium the surface skimmer worked very well indeed

allowed to persist next to their delicate tissues. Red Sea have developed an add-on, retrofit surface skimmer that affords excellent removal of surface material for existing Max customers demanding more from their system.

The skimmer unit was installed onto a standard Max aquarium that had been established as a display aquarium for around six months. In that time surface build-up had been regular and required manual adjustment of the weir plate every couple of days so that it could be removed. The first thing to do during installation is to remove the existing adjustable plate. This is done quite ruthlessly by simply pulling it off. This leaves behind the slotted overflow guard. The new surface skimmer slots easily into the guard. Straight away it is obvious that the skimmer provides a massive edge for the capture of surface material.

The toothed rim means that even very small fish can be prevented from entering the surface skimmer. Within less than a minute the debris accumulated on the surface of the water was removed, taken into the Max's filter system for processing by the mechanical filters and protein skimmer. It's as simple as that.

The surface skimmer is adjustable to an extent giving the aquarist fine control over its height. It certainly works well. At the time of writing the display Max has been running with this add-on for around 3 months with no obvious problems. We considered that pulling the water from the surface only might result in an accumulation of heavier detritus in the aquarium proper but this fear has not materialised. If we were to have one minor criticism it would be that the skimmer unit is large and casts a fairly significant shadow. For us this meant that a mushroom rock that had been stretching impressively is now a little more restrained but aquarists should be aware that a little rearrangement of the livestock might be necessary. With such healthy flow rates in the system the skimmer needs to be large to permit the 1100 litres per hour pulled through by the pumps over its tines.

The Surface Skimmer of the Red Sea Max is an excellent piece of kit for a relatively modest price of £19.99 – existing customers can also take advantage of its benefits. Retrofit versions should be in the shops shortly.

