

TRIED AND TESTED

Evolution Aqua eaProSump

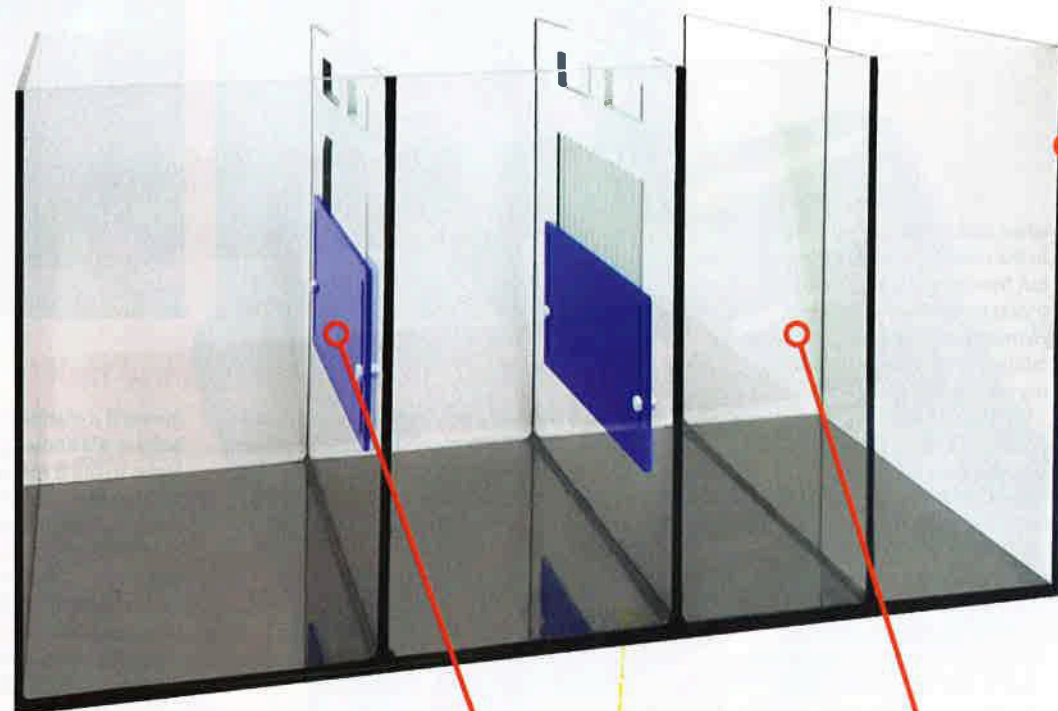
Marine expert Dave Wolfenden gets to try out one of the new off-the-peg sump units from Evolution Aqua.

EA's range of reef and aquascaping aquariums have superb build quality and attention to detail — and the new ProSumps (now available separately) are no exception. I don't know how they do it, but the sump is beautifully put together, and looks great with its black sealant. If you've ever tried to construct an aquarium with black silicone, you'll appreciate that it's not the easiest stuff to work with. I had a go once, and the end result looked like I'd made the thing in the dark, wearing oven mitts. EA told me that they spent a long time perfecting their techniques to get the product just right, and boy, does it show. There's not a smudge of stray silicone, there are no sharp edges (with all the outer panes being polished and chamfered), and there's no danger of getting cuts from any of the glass; it's such class, in fact, that it's almost a shame to have it hidden in a cabinet rather than on view, but there you go.

What's in the box?

I tested the 'large' version, which has an overall size of 800 x 380 x 400mm (L x W x H — external dimensions). EA recommends this size as being suitable for aquariums up to 300 l/66 gal, but this will vary according to the volume of water which overflows from the tank in the event of power interruption and you'll need to check with your system whether there is enough capacity to account for this. There are four chambers in the sump — three are linked together, with the fourth (with a nominal volume of 21.7 l) being physically separated, and intended for top-up water. EA suggests that the first chamber be used to house a skimmer (and, of course, a sock holder can clip onto this section nicely), the second housing reactors (carbon, phosphate remover, biopellets, etc.) or a refugium, and the third being designed for the aquarium's return pump. However, it's obviously your call how it's configured — folks running Triton, for example, can incorporate a refugium into the first chamber, run the skimmer and reactors from the second, and dose into the third (return) chamber.

The ProSump is solidly constructed — the outer panes are 6mm glass. The first and second dividers are chunky 8mm glass, the first having a large rectangular hole for water



Water level baffles

Fine tune the water levels in the first three chambers by moving these baffles.

flow, and the second with a series of very neatly cut slots. Both of these dividers also have three rectangular holes towards the upper edge — useful as emergency overflows. The quality of the work on these panes is very impressive — I'm not sure how the folks at EA manage to cut such neat slots and holes in

Foam matting

A base mat comes attached as standard, providing a stunning finish and avoiding any polystyrene work.

8mm glass, but they deserve a hat tip for it. The final divider (separating the return chamber and top-up section) is 6mm glass. A nice feature is the inclusion of a black foam mat on the sump's underside. This looks really neat, and saves any faffing around cutting polystyrene to shape.

Nice glass

Polishing and chamfering makes for gorgeous edges, constructed with immaculate silicone work.

In use

The water level in the chambers (with the exception of the final top-up section) can be adjusted thanks to the nifty baffles included with the sump. These are sheets of blue acrylic which can be fixed in place at varying heights using the included nylon bolts. The adjustable baffles aren't watertight (and they're not intended to be), but they work excellently when the sump is in use to fine-tune the levels in the first three chambers. This gives a good degree of flexibility; it comes in handy, for example, when using skimmers that are sensitive to water level, allowing for a consistent water height to be achieved in the appropriate chamber rather than bodging a stand for the skimmer. It also just generally makes the sump very versatile, allowing users to adjust water levels according to future modifications and system tweaks.

Using the baffles allows the water height to be varied from around 195mm to around 250mm in the first chamber and 130mm to around 250mm in the second chamber — there is no theoretical minimum water level in chamber three, but you'll obviously need sufficient depth to run the return pump. Depending on the equipment used and the system's requirements, some degree of experimentation and a 'suck it and see' approach will be necessary to arrive at the best arrangement of the baffles, but having the option of altering the sump's levels is a big plus point.

The instructions are clear and well laid out; aquarists with even a little experience will have a good idea of what they'd like to achieve, and have no problem figuring out how to set the sump up. I would have liked to see a little more detail in the instructions for novice aquarists;

perhaps some visuals outlining possible equipment placement options or how to best incorporate a refugium would help here (but I'm being picky there if I'm honest).

Also available is the smaller 'medium' version. This is more compact and designed for smaller tanks and cabinets (it's recommended for aquariums up to 150 l, being only 500 x 380 x 400mm (L x W x H)). The design of this version is really clever — it still utilises four chambers as in the large model (it also features the same moveable baffle concept), but instead of a 'linear' layout, the chambers are arranged in a '2 x 2' format (think of a slice of Battenberg cake and you get the idea). So while the sump is just as feature-packed and versatile as its bigger relative, the reduced length means it's going to be better suited to smaller cabinets. I can see some mileage in even larger versions of my test model for bigger aquariums.

EA's Jeremy Gay confirms that an 'XL' version is in the pipeline, with an 'XXL' form also being a possibility for really whopping systems — so watch this space...

Verdict

This is a very well thought-out sump design, offering bags of features and being extremely flexible. The build quality is superb, and if you're after a well-made and versatile off-the-peg sump for a build from scratch, or looking to upgrade an existing sump — well, I think you might have just found it.

- **Ease of use:** 4.5/5
- **Features:** 5/5
- **Value for money:** 4.5/5
- **Overall:** 4.5/5
- **Evolution Aqua eaProSump:** RRP £149 (Large); £99 (Medium).
- **More info:** visit www.evolutionaqua.com, or telephone 01942 216554.

4.5/5