

Introducing: Su-Mita Hill

The new Bibbulmun Track Foundation CEO, Su-Mita Hill, started work in early January this year.

We are enjoying getting to know her motivation and energy! Knowing that our community of maintenance volunteers – the largest volunteer cohort and the ones with the most direct contribution to the Track itself – might like to get to know her a little more too, we presented her with a list of pertinent questions.

So, here is Mita in her own words...

What about working with the BTF are you particularly passionate about?



I've always idealised wild spaces and felt a strong connection to the "Great Outdoors". As a kid, my grand plan was to run away and live in a cabin in a forest somewhere, and so far the closest I've got to that dream was the six weeks I spent on the Bibb in 2019. Being part of the Foundation lets me channel that lifelong love of nature into facilitating others to experience some of the joy and benefits of the 'wilderness' in this face-paced, domesticated world that we live in.

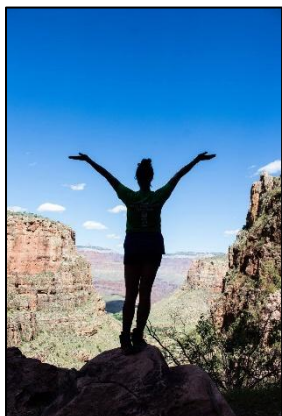
Plus, I get to work alongside people who care deeply about the Track, and the ecosystem that it inhabits, and who show, every day, what community stewardship looks like. That's a pretty special thing to be part of.

Reflections after my first few weeks...

I was lucky to have a bit of a gentle landing, starting during the office shutdown in January, but I definitely feel like the slow pace of the first fortnight is well and truly out the window now! I've been delighted – but not at all surprised - by how much knowledge lives in this volunteer community, and how willing everyone is to share it.

Other walking I've done around the world...

I've walked in a few different places – rocky National Parks around the US (Yosemite, Zion, the Grand Canyon), caminos (Portugal, Spain, France), alpine and semi-alpine summits in Canada (Three Sisters, Mount Fernie), Austria, the UK (Ben Nevis), Montenegro (Zabljak) and Nepal (Everest Base Camp, Tara Top), a few days on the Lycian Way in Turkey, and most recently was able to tick off sleeping next to an active volcano in Guatemala (Acatenango).



I also love the trails we have just a few hours' drive from Perth – obviously the Bibb is at the top of that list, but I've also done the Cape to Cape (end to end and shorter sections) and recently discovered the joys of the Ridge Walk and other summits in the Stirling Ranges National Park.

They all have their own flavour: some are busy and highly engineered, some are barely marked, or not at all, some are more cultural than wild. All have value to the communities that use them, and I'm grateful to the Bibb for being my gateway to the world of walking.

How do you think the Bibb stacks up globally?

It's hard for me to comment because, although I've hiked in plenty of diverse places, there are so many other hikes that I haven't explored at all. I also think that, much like it is foolish to compare art with other art, it would be remiss of me to try to compare hikes. There is no single 'correct' way to make, care for, or do a hike. I really love the wild, remote, uncured, challenging hikes, but I know that I only have the confidence and capacity to do those because of hikes like the Bibb with the incredible infrastructure, maintenance, and support.



What doing an E2E meant to me...

It had been a bucket list item for me for a long time, but honestly I wasn't sure how I'd handle it. In the end, I wish I'd had time to turn around and walk back! It took me a few days to get into the rhythm physically, but also mentally, but once I did, I loved the stripped back simplicity of living hut to hut, lunch break to lunch break, and step to step – spending evenings with no artificial light and waking up before dawn felt absolutely incredible and so different from my normal rhythms in the city!

Memorable moments from my E2E...

So many.

Misty mornings in the karri. That first hit of ocean after days inland. Random trail friendships. Those quiet stretches where it's just you, your footsteps, and the bush doing its thing.

Strangely enough I think the most memorable parts were the people! I met some absolutely fantastic humans along the way, including a crew of lovely and very welcoming maintenance vollies around Mount Clare (if that was you out working in on the trail in November 2019 – hi!).



Where volunteers make the biggest difference (from a walker's POV)...

I've realised very quickly that nothing on the Track "just happens." Every tidy hut, every clear section, every well-placed marker and buttressed bridge... someone has put effort into that, but in a way that is deliberately unobtrusive.

It's so easy as a walker to forget that the Track is a product of deliberate and ongoing human effort, and so easy to imagine that it just 'is'. That's a wonderful thing because it contributes to the feelings of space, isolation, removal from the trappings of society, and immersion in the natural environment.

At the same time, it's also wonderful to now become aware of the community of people – of whom I had been only peripherally cognisant - who work so tirelessly and often invisibly to keep things running (or rather walking) smoothly!



Final message...

Just a big, genuine thank you. For the hours, the sweat, the humour, the pride, and the love you pour into the Track. I'm really looking forward to working and walking alongside you all.