

# Community Conservation <sup>8</sup>

(contd.)

Since 2006, the Forest Rights Act has not only enabled some forest-dependent communities to continue using traditionally accessed forest resources as their right, but also given them a mandate for the conservation of those resources. By late 2014, over 2 lakh acres of forests were reclaimed by communities.

In the village of **Nayakheda** in Maharashtra, **Khoj** facilitated the filing of Community Forest Rights (CFRs) under FRA and the title was granted to the village in 2012. Since then the community has taken various measures to protect forests over 600 hectares, including a ban on hunting and cutting whole trees for firewood. In addition, fines are levied for grazing in non-designated areas and steps taken to mitigate fires.



*Above: The pasture-forest matrix of Nayakheda village in Maharashtra, protected legally through the Forest Rights Act, by the local community.*



*Above: Human and avian co-existence in Mangalajodi, Odisha.*

The idea of protecting forests is not limited to their role in providing resources for human use, but also for their own sake.

The village of **Mangalajodi** in Odisha, on the edge of the famous Chilika lagoon, is such an example, where village residents who previously hunted various species of birds in the wetlands were transformed into their conservators. The effort was initiated by **Wild Orissa** who employed cultural and ethical arguments to help with this transformation, and then trained local individuals as guides. An interesting aspect of this transformation was that the wetland was cordoned off only from hunting, but not other human uses like grazing and fishing, which appear to be in harmony with the birds.



*Left to right: Purple moorhen and Cinnamon bittern, two of the more charismatic of the estimated 200 species of birds who call the wetland of Mangalajodi their home.*

A directory published by pune-based Kalpavriksh is the world's first country-wide compilation and analysis of CCAs (community conserved areas). It describes a diversity of initiatives, attempting to gain a deeper understanding of conservation of biological diversity, local livelihoods, peoples' rights and development, through around 140 case studies across 23 Indian states.



*Above: A Kalpavriksh poster that gives a glimpse of the diversity of landscapes and initiatives under CCAs in the country.*