

## Island 22 in the stream

When gobsmacked cottagers on Big Brother Lake near Minden, Ont., watched a 35- by 20-metre section of forest float by, studded with spruce trees and even the odd beaver lodge, they must have wondered who had spiked their drinks. But it was no hallucination. Floating islands *can* occur.

Chet Van Duzer, author of *Floating Islands: A Global*

*Bibliography*, says sometimes it just takes rising water to submerge loose, peaty soil. Heavy rain elevated Big Brother's water to unprecedented levels last June. "Gases trapped in the soil from the decomposition of plants can make the soil buoyant enough to rise. Trees then act as sails in the wind." Van Duzer knows of 21 documented cases of floating islands in Canada since 1858.

So what will happen to

number 22, temporarily tethered to terra firma by locals concerned about its dock-crushing force? Most likely it will become landlocked when water levels drop. In the meantime, just hope the ropes hold.

—Kate Barker

