After you listen to the story, “The Magic Swan Geese” check out the activities below. There’s something for your inner everyone—the artist, the botanist, the baker, the biologist...Click on the one you are most interested in, or try them all!

Activities for the...

**Artist:** Origami Swans

**Baker:** A Recipe for Russian Rye Bread (Borodinsky bread)

**Biologist:** What exactly is a swan goose?

**Botanist:** The Wild Apples of Kazakhstan

**Mathematician:** How many swan geese would it take to carry off your little brother?

**Philosopher:** Questions to ponder

**Extra Curious:** Sources & further reading
For the Artist: Origami Swans

**Supplies:** 1 sheet of origami (or any square) paper.

**Start** with the color or pattern you want your swan to be face down on the table.

**Step 1:** Fold your paper in half diagonally to make a triangle.

**Step 2:** Unfold your paper (pattern side still down).

**Step 3:** Fold both sides from the point toward the center to make a kite shape, as shown.

Step 4: Flip the paper over, so that the pattern side is on top and the folds you just made are face down.

**Step 5:** Make another kite fold on this side, same as before, folding both sides to the center.

**Step 6:** Fold the kite tail up to meet the point at the other end.

Step 7: Fold down a small portion of pointy end down to form the swan head.

**Step 8:** Fold your bird in half down the center line.

**Step 9:** Pull the swan’s neck and head up (but not too far up) to form a new crease where the body meets the neck.

**Step 10:** Spread your tail feathers enough stand and your swan is finished! If it doesn’t sit on a flat surface, you can make little adjustments until it does.

Once you have enough swans, call upon them to chase your little brother (or sister) around the house! Or, create a (wild apple) forest for your swan geese! If you haven’t already, you can even create Baba Yaga’s hut!

For the Baker: A Recipe for Russian Rye Bread (Borodinsky Bread)

In America, rye bread is often a specialty item and for some, it’s an acquired taste. When I thought of rye bread, I always thought of pumpernickel, which as a child, I wouldn’t touch, just like the girl in our story. But, not all rye breads are the same. The honey makes this one sweet, and the coriander gives it enough intrigue to leave you wanting more.

Note: This recipe calls for Russian rye malt powder, which can be hard to find in the US. I started making this bread before I realized that I didn’t have rye malt powder. At first I panicked, but then I decided to use barley malt instead. The rye malt powder is what gives this bread its flavor, and it won’t be the same without it, but the bread will still be delicious. Our loaf of bread was gone in under an hour, quicker than our latest pan of brownies! If the substitution is discouraging, try another Russian bread recipe! Or, get really wild and make your own malt powder!

Ingredients:

1 ¼ cups of wheat flour  
1 cup of rye flour  
1 cup of warm water minus 1-2 Tablespoons (220 ml of water)  
2 Tablespoons of rye malt powder (or if you can’t find it, 2 ½ Tablespoons of barley malt)  
2 ¼ teaspoons active dry yeast  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon coriander  
1 Tablespoon oil (Safflower or Canola)  
1 Tablespoon honey  
1 teaspoon coriander (ground)  
Coriander seeds

Directions:

In a large bowl, mix the dry ingredients: wheat and rye flour, yeast, salt and ground coriander. If you are using Russian rye malt powder, add it now, and stir again.

Mix the warm water with honey, then pour it into the flour mixture. (If you are using barley malt, add it now as well.) Add the oil, and knead the dough. It will be very sticky, thick but still elastic. You can grease your hands with a little oil if the dough is too sticky to work with, this will help.

Put the dough in a clean bowl in a warm corner and let it rise 1 hour, or until it has doubled. When it doubles, punch it down and put it in a greased loaf pan (we have also used a circle pan). Let rise for 30 more minutes.

Mix a little flour and water, brush the dough with it, and then sprinkle on the coriander seeds. Bake at 400°F for 30 minutes, then at 350°F for 30 more minutes. Let it cool completely, then enjoy!
For the Biologist: What exactly is a Swan Goose?

Swan geese are native to eastern Asia. They spend summers in the steppes and low mountains of Mongol Daguur, part of a protected wetlands ecosystem that spans Mongolia, Russia (Dauria), and China (Hunlan Lake). In the winter, they prefer Shengjin Lake and the Yangtze River in China.

Swan geese are found by lakes, rivers, ponds or other wetlands near tall grasses. They are crepuscular, which means they like to be active during twilight - both morning and evening. They sleep both at noon and midnight.

Swan geese are large birds, 31 - 37 inches long (2 ½ to 3 feet), and weigh around 7 pounds. Their wingspan is between 5-6 feet!

Female swan geese lay 5-6 eggs in late April or early May, and the eggs begin to hatch by the end of May. By 8 weeks, a baby swan goose is ready to fly, and by 12 weeks, it can live on its own, though it often chooses to stay with its family for longer.

In the wild, swan geese are very hard to track, so we don’t know how long they live. We do know that domesticated swan geese live an average of 20 years, and some have even lived up to 40 years.

Humans have been domesticating swan geese for a long time, eating their eggs and meat, and using their feathers for quills and bed stuffing. But watch out--if you get too close, they’ll bite!
For the Botanist: Wild Apples of Russia

**What are wild apples?** When you think of apples, you might think of Granny Smith, Pink Lady, Red or Golden Delicious apples, or another one of the 15 main varieties that fill our produce aisles these days. When you think about where apples come from, you might think of orchards, or of Johnny Appleseed, the pioneer who spread apple seeds across the East and Midwest. (At one point North America had 16,000 varieties of apples.)

Now, imagine taking a walk in a forest. Perhaps you’ve taken a walk through a pine or oak forest before. (In the Sonoran desert, you may have taken a walk in a cholla forest.) In your imaginary forest, you look up and notice that every tree around you is filled with fruit. This is not an orchard, with trees evenly spaced. This is truly a wild forest, where the seeds are spread by birds and bears, the blossoms are pollinated by bees, and apples grow in all shapes, sizes and flavors--sweet, sour, acidic, even licorice-flavor.

The modern day apple has its origins in the wild apple forests of Central Asia, forests that now only grow in patches in the Tian Shan mountains of Kazakhstan. Some of these forests in the Ile-Alatau National Park are protected, but the diversity of the wild apple is endangered. These forests contain many secrets of flavor, texture, and history, and we still have much to learn from them.

**Read More** about Wild Apples:

- [The Fatherland of Apples](#), by Gary Paul Nabhan
- [Apples of Eden: Saving the Wild Ancestor of Modern Apples](#), by National Geographic
For the Mathematician: How many swan geese would it take to carry off your little brother (or sister)?

That all depends on how much your brother (or sister) weighs.

Let's say a swan goose can carry its own weight, which is, let's say, 7 pounds. So, if your brother (or sister) was just born, he (or she) might weigh seven pounds, and one swan goose could carry him (or her) off by itself.

If your brother (or sister) is two, he'd (she'd) might be about 28 pounds. How many geese would you need then?

You have 28 “brother pounds” (or “sister pounds”). 7 pounds can be carried by 1 swan...a second swan could carry 7 more brother pounds...which is how many? Is it enough? How many more swans do we need?

So, how many swans to carry 28 brother (sister) pounds?

Now, weigh your brother (sister). How much does he (she) weigh?

How many swans will you need to carry him (her) off? How many swans would it take to carry you?

For the Philosopher: Questions to ponder

If the sister had been paying attention to her little brother, would the swan geese have taken him?

What does Baba Yaga want with the little brother?

What makes the swan geese magic? Why do they obey Baba Yaga?

Why do you think the apple tree, the oven, and the river want the girl to eat and drink of them?

Do you think the girl tells her parents about what happened?

When the little brother grows up, do you think he remembers the swan geese or Baba Yaga?

Send us your thoughts and questions at storiesforscamps@scoundrelandscamp.org!
For the Extra Curious: Sources & further reading

The Magic Swan Geese

Origami Swans

Borodinsky Rye Bread

Wild Apples


Swan Geese
