Beautiful imagery, Eowyn. Rich evocative examples. Thank you for your candor and your graceful modeling of this way of being in the world.

Your post and your question about unexpected moments of serenity brings to mind the joy and ease that is arising as **S.T.O.P.**practice becomes more and more habitual.

1.      While performing some task, muscle tension catches the attention. Here the **"S," the "stop"** happens.

2.      The **"T," the "taking of a breath,"** happens.

3.      The **"O," the "intentionally observing"** recognizes tension and aggression.

a.      At this point the muscles ease, as if they had done their job in attracting the attention.

b.      There is gratitude for the noticing of the sensation.

c.      And a curiosity about the tension and aggression, which is best described as opposing sides: one is forcing the doing of the task, and the other side resisting the doing, which makes a misery of the activity.

d.      This painful, ineffective mode of operation is observed, really seen and felt; honored, if you will, and soon as it is acknowledged, it falls away, as does the tension in the upper back.

e.      Waves of gratitude arise. Ordinary sensations are recognized as miracles, are appreciated from the heart.  There is pure joy; appreciation of the aliveness of the body, the countless mysteries of the universe seen in a bird at the feeder or warm soapy water on the hands, or the functioning of the digestive system, a nearby car door slamming, the capacity to be aware, everything is momentarily seen as miracles, including the task at hand,

4.      which becomes a sensory experience of awareness, warmth and gentleness. The habit of forcing it and resisting it melts as thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations are simply observed. There is an openness that allows:

a.      the recognition of the task’s value and enjoys the aliveness of the body and mind and the completing of the task or,

b.      the discovery of how the task can be revised or adapted or shifted in some way, or

c.      the conclusion that the task is unnecessary or mis-timed, and can be dropped or postponed.

And that's the **"P" of "proceed and new possibilities."**

5.      Of course, sometime later the old habits of tension and aggression are again in full swing, the body again sends up an alarm which, thanks to mindfulness practice, is more likely to be noticed, and the **S.T.O.P.** approach kicks in again, increasingly, with each application, taking on more of a life of its own. 

Reading your post, Eowyn, brought these recent “S.T.O.P.” moments to mind. Contentment increasingly has a chance as these practices are repeated and become the new habits. Taking some time to articulate them in response to your question has clarified them even more. Thank you!