

Seeing things in Western Australia

From DON SMITH in Perth

UNIDENTIFIED flying objects must have been seeing a lot of people in Western Australia lately.

There is ample evidence that Western Australians have become acutely UFO-conscious and, whatever the reason, possibly an awareness of America's man - in - space programme or simply curiosity about past accounts of flying saucers, are spending more time out of doors gazing skywards.

And they are turning in an unprecedented number of UFO reports.

Even if the objects remain unidentified, the people who see them are not. With no inhibitions about possible ridicule from publicity, they are eager to testify about their experiences and many have produced witnesses to back them up.

In little more than two

weeks more than 20 UFO sightings have been reported from various parts of the State.

But all this is old hat to the residents of the wheat-belt town of Corrigin (145 miles south-east of Perth), which must take the prize for Australia's most UFO-conscious community. Here, say the locals, several sightings a week is about par for the UFO course.

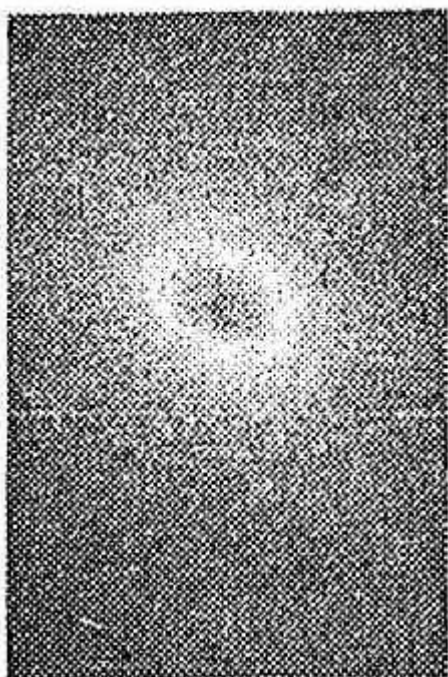
Flight path

According to some residents of the district, some 200 sightings have been logged around Corrigin in the past 18 months. This has led them to claim that the town lies on a regular flying saucer flight path.

Few of the Corrigin people who have reported UFOs have been labelled as cranks. Nor is the most popular sighting time when the local pubs lock up for the night.

Many of the accounts

Many of the accounts are those of farmers, out on their tractors ploughing



"A huge saucer-like" object photographed over Canberra in 1963.

and seeding in the small hours of the morning, and some of their descriptions have had an eerie similarity.

Consider the case of farmer Mr Raymond Smith who, while ploughing at 3.50am recently, saw a red light hovering above him, alternately fading and growing brilliant.

Another night, a neighbouring farmer, Mr Alan McAndrew, was ploughing

when "everything went red". He said later that his tractor and the field around were bathed in a red glow. The source, a bright red light overhead, blinked on and off, then disappeared.

Still another Corrigan farmer, Mr Ken Tipton, stoutly declares his disbelief in UFOs, but says he cannot explain a flashing red and green object which hovered above his tractor. At first he thought it was a helicopter; but there was no noise.

Suburban Perth has had a rash of UFO reports in the past three weeks. Some have brought new variations to the flying saucer and flying cigar themes (to wit, "like the end of a loaf of bread with a pinched-in waist"), but most have had the common denominator of a bright glow, generally red.

Sergeant Tom Hogg, a husky member of the Special Air Service, says he, his wife, and a friend spent almost an hour watching an oval object, with a pulsating light, hovering 600 to 700 yards from their home.

About five miles away, but on a different night, Mrs Roma Klein reported a silvery object which gave

a silvery object which gave out an orange-red glow that hurt her eyes.

Early in the UFO epidemic, journalist Tony Hannah was sent by his paper to investigate a flying saucer report in the hills near Perth. He went to scoff but returned to file an eye-witness account of "an incredible sight — a light orange object that hovered, moved languidly, then sped away".

Mr Hannah said, "It was not an aircraft or a satellite. It was like nothing I had seen before".

Theories

Almost as fast as UFO reports have been made, theories have been put up to explain them.

The Government Astronomer, Mr B. J. Harris, believes a lot of the reports have been caused by the planet Venus, which has just entered its brightest phase. Venus, says Mr Harris, has been exceptionally brilliant and clouds or atmospheric conditions could appear to make it move.

However, Venus is for early-risers and Mr Harris says he cannot explain sightings that have been made in the late evenings.

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Other professional and amateur explanations range from low-flying aircraft to meteorological balloons.

But some residents of a certain farming town will have none of this.

They would not be greatly surprised if a UFO lands a being at Corrigin before Apollo 11 puts a man on the moon.