

## Great Plains Zoo opens new snow monkey exhibit

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The payoff for a \$4.6 million investment was celebrated Saturday when the Great Plains Zoo officially opened a new snow monkey exhibit.

Thousands of visitors, drawn by free admission, streamed into the zoo to see the new exhibit and tour other renovations that have taken place since zoo officials began carrying out a strategic plan in 2007.

These include a new Asian cat exhibit that opened in 2008, the former children's zoo remodeled into a face-to-face farm in 2009, and a rhinoceros exhibit that opened in 2010.

"We've replaced aging infrastructure and connected the excellent parts of the zoo. It offers better living for our animals and significant wows for our guests," zoo president and CEO Elizabeth Whaley said.

The city of Sioux Falls contributed \$2.1 million to the zoo renovation. Former city council member Vernon Brown, who is on the zoo board of directors, recalled when the zoo's future was in doubt nearly a decade ago, when the institution was characterized by low attendance and exhibits that did not meet modern standards.

"From that low point when we made the decision to continue investing in the zoo I think the city has had great confidence in it," he said. Brown noted annual attendance is now 250,000, more than double what it was when the strategic plan was developed.

The snow monkeys mark the 18th endangered species in the Great Plains Zoo's collection of more than 1,000 animals. Sioux Falls is one of only 13 zoos in the country to exhibit and breed the endangered monkeys, according to Whaley.

The new exhibit consists of 10 monkeys, seven of which are currently on display, including an infant. The animals are a well designed exhibit for Sioux Falls, said Whaley. They thrive in winter and will make an inviting year-round display for visitors at the remodeled zoo entrance.