

Fire Decimates Zoo in Russia's Far East

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A faulty heater caused a fire at a city zoo in far eastern Russia, killing about two dozen animals but sparing the pride of the park, an extremely rare Amur leopard, local officials said Monday.

Firefighters were not immediately alerted to the scene on Saturday night because the night watchman, who was new on the job, tried in vain to put out the blaze by himself, a spokesman for Komsomolsk-on-Amur's fire department said.

The deceased animals, which included a python, five monkeys, three chinchillas, three large bats, six parrots and several other birds, were presumably killed by smoke inhalation, the city administration said in a statement.

A flower-laying ceremony is planned for Tuesday in honor of the deceased animals, some of which had been living in the zoo for decades and become well-known among locals.

The Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper said that as many as 70 of the 240 animals in the park might have been killed in the fire, but that the incident has been downplayed because it

coincided with the regional governor's visit to the city.

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